

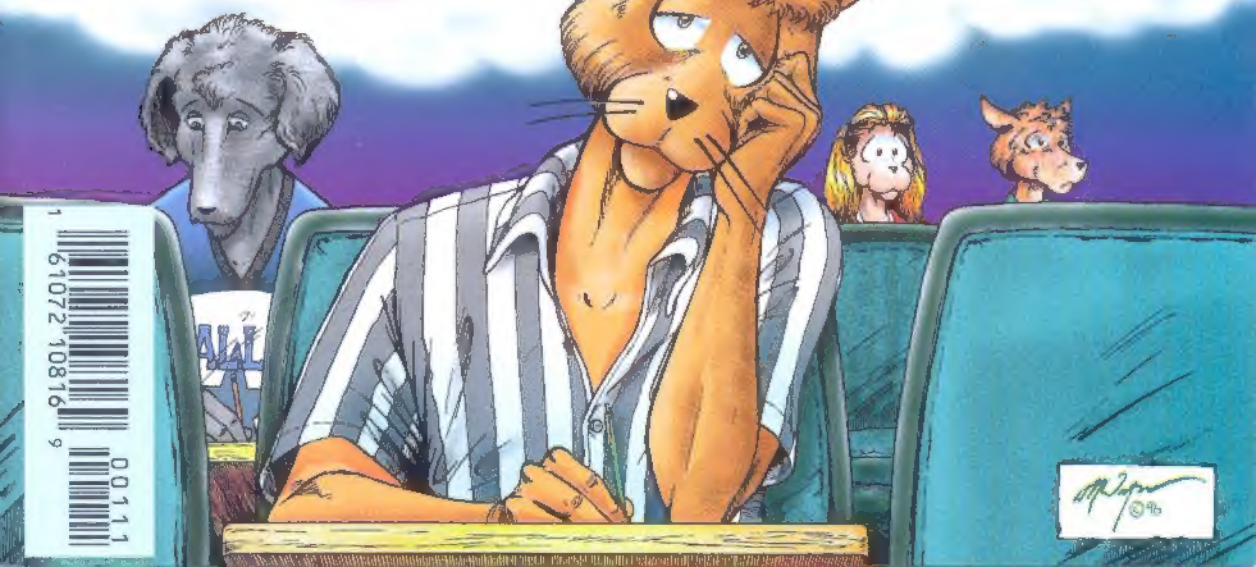
AN ANTARCTIC PRESS PUBLICATION FOR MATURE AUDIENCES • \$2.95 \$4.10 CAN



MARTIN WAGNER'S

# Hepcats

NUMBER 1 DECEMBER 1996



*Martin Wagner*  
96





# HEPCATS 1

## CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1997 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)

*Hepcats* #1 was written and drawn in the early part of 1989—to be honest I think I actually got going on it towards the end of 1988—very soon after I had decided I wanted to publish *Hepcats* myself as a comic book, and forego the virtually insurmountable obstacles present to any cartoonist trying to get newspaper syndication for a daily strip. (By the way, we'll be getting that reprint of *The Collegiate Hepcats*, the daily strip collection, out real soon now.)

One of the first things you'll notice when going through the issue is that it seems very light—nearly nonexistent—on story; this is a little deceptive. It is true that, at this time, I was feeling horribly confined by the postage-stamp sized panels afforded me by the daily strip format. And having just discovered comic books again, particularly the amazing vistas in *Cerebus* and the then-new Marvel editions of *Moebius*, I wanted to get a lot of Big Pictures out of my system. So, with the freedom to fill an entire sheet of Bristol with whatever I wanted to fill it with, I did so with abandon, including my first really detailed drawing of the University of Texas tower (which I vowed I'd never draw again, only to end up doing it in 1993 for *Collegiate's* cover).

But in the process, I got into something I'd never really explored in the daily strip, but the existence of which was only logical given the way certain story threads had been going: this Walter Mitty-ish fantasy life, particularly *vis-à-vis* girls and getting laid, of Joey's. I touched on it again briefly in issue #0 last month, but here, the first half of the story is a dialogue-free romp through Joey's horny id, albeit hopefully done with enough humor and panache that only the most strident bluenose or feminazi could consider the sequence demeaning to women when it should be obvious that Joey ultimately is the butt of the joke. It's no deep or profound insight that people—especially college guys—think about sex all the time, and I had a feeling that this scene would speak to a lot of readers. And judging by the first batch of letters to come in, it did.

As a writer I'm intrigued a lot by what goes on in people's minds. The idea that the composed, meek looking little fellow sitting next to you on the bus could be entertaining crazed snuff fantasies is something not many of us either take seriously, or even think goes on in the first place, or would care if it did. But your mind is where everything starts and stops; you are who you are because of it. And inner fantasy realms are things that intrigue me as a writer, and that I intend to do more with.

In the second half of the story, we meet Gunther and get a bit of a look into his and Joey's friendship. It's fairly sitcommy, but like any good sitcom touches on aspects of reality (late rent, unvoiced personal frustrations) we can all identify with. And in this story, I really made my first attempt to pin down the character traits of Joey and Gunther that would manifest themselves as the comic book series got underway. Joey as immature, a prisoner of his wants; Gunther as more even-keeled, wiser, almost Joey's surrogate dad or big brother.

I had sown the seeds of these traits in the daily strip—by this time I'd been doing the strip for a year and a half and had gotten the characterizations reasonably down. But it wasn't until the comic book started that I feel I started pinning them down firmly. Beforehand, Gunther had a bit of a wilder, party-dude streak to him; Joey was actually someone Arnie could look up to for a while, a bit more aggressive and self-assured. And then there were all those other characters that never made it to the comic book at all. So, settling on Joey, Gunther, Arnie and Erica as my four leads, then really nailing their varying personality traits, were my goals upon launching *Hepcats* the comic book. That and drawing Big Pictures. In fact, I felt so liberated by being able to draw large, so to speak, that it was immensely difficult for me to go back to work on the tiny little daily strip; if you read *The Collegiate Hepcats*, you'll notice toward the end there's a stretch where the work seems fairly uninspired. This is why.

So if *Hepcats* #1 seems light, the reasons are obvious: I was getting my feet wet in a new format, and I was breaking free of a lot of strictures imposed upon me by my previous format, and trying to work out several details into the bargain. So a featherweight bit of slice-of-life was really all I felt ready to handle in one go. It wasn't until #3, the beginning of *Snowblind*, that I took the training wheels off.

Sign up to the  
**HEPCATS INFORMATION  
SERVICE**

It's free to anywhere on Earth!  
Just send your name and address to:  
**P.O. BOX 27157  
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157**



# DEAR Hepcats

P.O. BOX 27157  
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157  
hepcats@eden.com

Just in time to go to press, the first batch of e-mails about Hepcats 0 poured in. I want to thank everyone for the astounding reception H0 has gotten; it does a body good to be welcomed back among the living so warmly. Incidentally, a great many letters are from new fans discovering and falling in love with Hepcats for the very first time, which tells me that the decision to re-release the first 12 issues monthly was a good one, despite the fact some old fans were understandably irked. I hope you'll all see the benefit as legions of new Hepfans join the fold.

Dear Martin:

Congratulations on the publication of Hepcats #0 and your deal with Antarctic. I look very much forward to even reprints of your work.

I got "hooked" on Hepcats about two-odd years back, when I found myself with some spending money and on a prolonged business trip (the "three hour tour" kind), and started buying graphic novels as a way of both passing the time and checking out some of the comics I'd not read before. I picked up a copy of *Collegiate Hepcats* and fell in love with it. Ultimately I found *Snowblind Part One*, and then followed that up some months later with an order for a hardbound copy of the same. I picked up individual issues here and there (I think I even had a subscription, though between a couple of house moves on my part and publishing moves on your part, I suspect it's fallen between the cracks). Thus, it was with great expectation that I got on the order list through Mile High for the new run.

As to the actual story, it falls somewhere between *Collegiate* and *Snowblind*, lacking some of the gag humor in the former and some of the emotional wringer stuff of the latter. Which, for the moment, is just fine, since *Snowblind* brings up a lot of powerful memories for me, mostly from the Arnie PoV. Indeed, the apparent normalcy of everything going on still gave me a few shivers, knowing what's coming for Arnie and Erica.

I found the use of color very interesting. It adds a richness to the whole affair, but also distracts in some way from the gorgeous architectural and personal detail of your b&w art. Like *Usagi Yojimbo*, I'm not sure I want to see Hepcats solely in color in the future, but I don't mind seeing it much, or even most, of the time.

At any rate, here's hoping that H0 is the start of a beautiful new life for the Hepcats world.

## DAVE HILL

In case you're needing the knowledge that people out there really do read and enjoy what you've been doing, let me confirm the suspicion. :) Sometime in the autumn of 1993 (I think—I could be off by months), you visited a trade show in Washington DC. A friend, Tim Sussman, was along there, and you signed two copies of the *Cerebus/Hepcats* crossover illo for us. Whilst things are no longer nearly as close between us, life goes on, and we'll be meeting again at ConFurence presently.

*Hepcats* is another of those fragments of meme making up our memories. It's been hilarious and absurd (*Comics Gallery* in Mira Mesa happened to have a hardcover copy of *The Collegiate Hepcats* in, now safely back home), and occasionally horrifying. I'm looking forward to where things now take the crew. (You may claim to have some say in that, but.. :)

## PORSUPAH

*I remember that show well. The Diamond Retailers' Conference. Tim and his friend Dig (with a soft "g"). Dave Sim, Colleen Doran and I signed jam prints until our arms were sore up to the elbow and we could barely stand up straight. If the Powers That Be hadn't gone and gutted out the comics industry, we all might be doing that yet today. Sigh.*

Well, I bet you're being buried in e-mail today with the first new Hepcats in what, 2 years? And I complain about *Strangers in Paradise* taking 6-8 weeks between issues!

Well, first the lowdown on how I started up with Hepcats. *The Collegiate Hepcats* hardcover is what started me on this title. Until the past week it was all I had too. I bought the *Collegiate* collection about 6-10 months ago during a slow week out of curiosity. I recognized the title and decided, what the heck give it a shot. Well, it was great fun to read and, once I heard the original series was going to be reprinted I thought I had perfect timing. Now, for the past 2 months I've been driving my local store nuts asking if it was in yet (along with asking the same question re a handful of other titles). Now I have a 'real' issue to read.

So, what did I (a fairly new Hepcats reader) think? Well, I'd have to say it was very enjoyable and now I'll have to debate the CD (grrr, more \$\$\$). The

colour was very well done and I enjoyed it more here than I have so far in *Strangers in Paradise* which also just added colour. I see that this is the only issue that will have it, which is unfortunate but won't affect my purchasing of future issues. The story felt like it would fit right into the old *Collegiate* collection (which I know isn't in continuity but...) which was good to see. I hoped the characters I enjoyed in that collection would still be recognizable. I worried a bit about this issue as I didn't care for issue #1 (via the *Collegiate* collection). Issue 1 seemed too much like a batch of large pictures with little story, but it may have just appeared that way due to the newspaper strip nature of the entire collection.

Well, due to a 50% off special at the local store I also picked up #10 and can see great hope for the 10 issues that I haven't seen yet. Only problem now is I can hardly wait for #9 and #11.

By the way, the second story, *Adventures of Super-Dynamo Boy*, was cute. I loved the crayon on lined paper nature (was it photos of drawings you did?) of the story and it sure felt like an 8 year old wrote it. Seeing more of this type might get old quick, but once in a blue moon would be fun.

Well, good luck with this new run. I will encourage my local store to get more copies in the future (as they only had subscription copies this week) as that is the only way I can help insure that I see issues 13 - 100 (if I recall correctly this is supposed to be a 100 issue series).

## JOHN NORTHEY

Fishnet Kid (nickname via something that happened at the '96 Chicago Con)  
CAMBRIDGE, ON, CANADA

Martin—

I was just checking out your website for the first time in several months, when I came across the details of the Radio Hepcats disc, and was surprised as heck to see the lead track was being performed by... Mistle Thrush!

Yowl

I used to live with some of those folks! They rehearsed in my basement back in Brighton, Mass., when I was living in a split house, with eight people living on my side, and 6 or so people living on the other. To be honest, I never thought they were that good (other than Val's vocals), listening to them rehearse. But I bought their first CD (*agus amarach*) just before I left for L.A. and was very pleasantly surprised... stunning! I listened to a tape of it again and again on my drive out to California. I never got the chance



to tell 'em how much I enjoyed it. (The only band member who lived on my side of the house was Brad, who quit the group after the first CD and moved to Florida; the only other ones who might remember me are Val, who didn't live in the house, and maybe Scott, who sublet my room one summer while I was away, then moved to the other side of the house.) But now, thanks to your web site leading to their website, I can drop 'em an EMail via Bedazzled, and order their new CD, too. Cool!

And while I'm here—I've already got a Hepcats #0 coming to me, but how would I go about ordering the Radio Hepcats CD as well?

**COREY KLEMOW**  
LOS ANGELES, CA

*One more time for all who missed it: just send \$13.00 ppd. to me at P.O. Box 27157, Austin, TX 78755-2157, although Canadians and other exotic foreigners will have to send US\$16.50 by international money order. I've been oozing with glee over the response the CD is getting; we may have to go back to press with it!*

Hepcats #0 is great and I'm glad to see it getting a good distribution. I was excited to see Hepcats in glorious Paintbox COLOR, but I felt a pang of remorse at the loss of your wonderful hatching.

I was introduced to *Collegiate Hepcats* when I entered college. I was hooked immediately by your novel style and specifically the hatching used to indicate shade and texture. Instead of the machine-slick, expensive tone "dot sheets," this looked like an honest-to-goodness college student, hunched in a newspaper office hatching away at something of which he is proud.

Then, I saw Hepcats #1 and picked up the other issues later (yay reprints!). I realized that you had made the fabled leap from college "hobby" to professional career. You had finally entered the medium that gave your stunning pen-&-inks a much deserved freedom of page.

I decided that if this guy can do it (at least in college), then so can I. Now in my junior year, I publish my own strip and am editorial cartoonist for my campus paper, "The Cardinal". If I go nowhere else with this, I have still had a blast doing what I wanted to do: creating my own comic strip.

So, I just wanted to say, "Thanks for the inspiration." You are a "hometown boy" who has made good and there are many more like me wondering if, just maybe, we can do it as well.

Finally, I want to mourn—what appears to be—the passing of the hatching. The color looks great, but when I think of Wagner, I will always think of that wonderful hatching.

**BROCK HARMON**  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE  
LOUISVILLE, KY

*I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to have done at least one color issue in my career, but I must say I'm only too happy to be going back to black and white. Color is extremely vivid and immediate, but black and white has a character all its own that I really feel comfortable with. I may do another color issue someday, but at this stage I don't know. We'll just have to wait and see.*

Dear Martin,

Just came across *Hepcats* #0 and *Snowblind Part One* (you had signed and sketched Joey in it—thankx!). Much enjoyed. The opening of *Snowblind*, with Arnie asking the doctor what the problem was, was very good! I've not finished the book yet—I'm trying to prolong the experience as long as possible.

I first came across *Hepcats* in the form of *The Collegiate Hepcats* a couple of years ago. Funny & amusing &, dare I say it, touching. And also disappointing—I thought it was a one-shot. No more adventures of Joey and his circle of friends. Oh, the horror, the horror! So, perhaps you can imagine my joy of discovering more *Hepcats* at this wonderful comix/cartoon/animation shop (whose name I can't remember, darn it—but it isn't Lion and Unicorn).

Anyway, I like your sense of humor, artistic style (very clear & clean—a joy to the eye!), & characterization. Each of us is like a gravity-well (sun, planet, black hole) with planets of various sorts orbiting around us in sometimes elliptical, sometimes retrograde & especially eccentric orbits. Not to get too cosmic, though.

That's about it. The only thing I could think of would be to ask for a believable, "bear-ish" gay male character in the *Hepcats* universe. Oh well, just a thought—always be true to your vision.

**JAMES ODOM**  
BIRMINGHAM, AL

Hi there Martin!

Read *Hepcats* 0 a couple days ago, and enjoyed it greatly. 'Twas no great shakes compared to *Snowblind*, but it's a nice gentle intro to the characters for those unfamiliar with the series.

I went back and read all of *Snowblind* after reading H0. As a long-time reader, it'll be rough not having any new material for a while. It's good to see you back out there, though. Best of luck.

When the time comes, please don't color H11 (the one that had the black-on-black cover). Especially for certain scenes, color would detract from their power. 'Sup to you, of course, though. The colorist has done a nice job so far. I wasn't as horrified as I thought I'd be :).

May I ask a technical question? What kind of instrument do you use to ink your work? Or could you recommend a "beginner's pen" for someone (me) who has little-to-no control over their line?

Looking forward to future is-

sues of *Hepcats*. Hang in there, I'm rooting for ya!

Bye,

**BETH JONES**

*I ink with a Hunt 108 artist's nib (that's a crowquill, folks). Now, some artists prefer a 100 or a 102. I think Dave Sim uses a 102 but I'm not sure. I find those nibs to be a little too flimsy for my needs but they actually might be excellent "beginner" nibs. The 108 is a pretty tough little nib and if you don't know what you're doing with it you can break it, bend it and snap it, and generally fuck it up. But once you get used to it I think it's the best, especially for fine detail work.*

Walked into a comics store yesterday. Not very impressive. Water stain on the ceiling. Lousy racks. Not a very good selection of anything interesting. Okay, I can leave. Wait.

What's that? On the top of that rack, wayyy over by the door. Is it really? Can it be?

YEEESS!!!! A NEW *HEPCATS*! (Life is goooooo!) Color, even! (Fortunately it's now dark so I can't read it while I'm driving home.) Can't wait to crack the book. Ooh, a Joey/Gunther tale. I love the college days so this should be a treat.

I'm not sure about the color, though. Don't think I like it but I'm not sure why. Maybe it distracts me too much from the characters. Gunther's expressions on p. 6 are great, but they get lost in the green background and the dark grey of his skin. Maybe Spawn and the like need fancy colors because they don't have characters or plots. But your artwork helps bring out the subtleties in your characters (cf Joey's ears on pp. 6&7), and that precision helps me care more about your characters.

If you need color to sell the new series, then so be it. (I'll still buy it a) to support you and b) for the new back-ups. But I don't think I'll enjoy the stories as much as the b&ws.

So, speaking of stories, you left this one pretty open. What happens at the party? And why didn't Joey/Gunther recognize her from the Mountain of Venus? Will all be revealed in *Hepcats* -1? Enquiring minds want to know.

Enough bitching. Thanks for writing another story. Thanks for finding a way to keep the flame alive so we can see *Snowblind* 2 published. Now lay off the coloring so you can work faster, dammit!

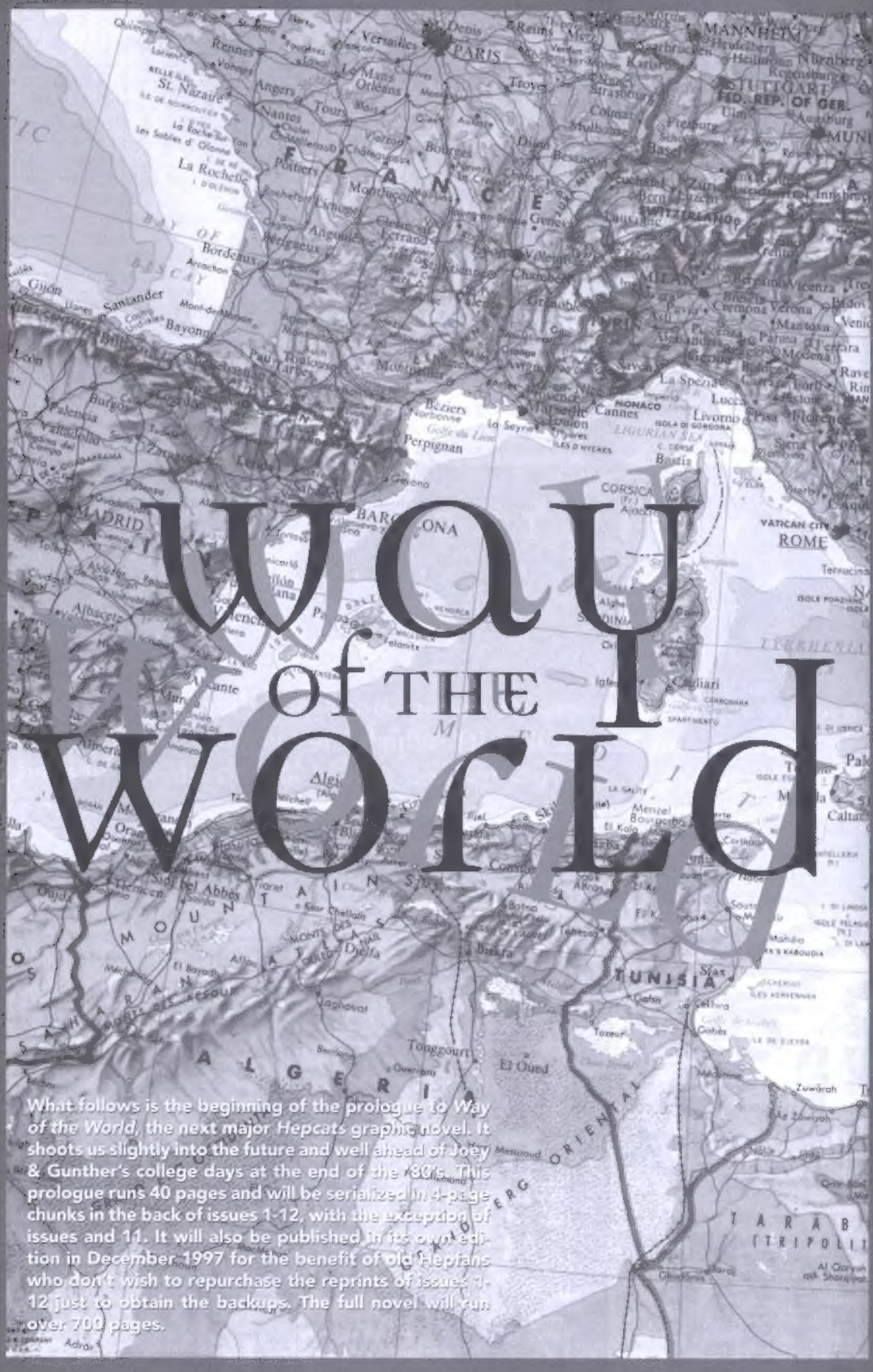
**DUNCAN SANDILAND**

*Actually, "Friday" takes place before the Mountain of Venus escapade (from *Collegiate Hepcats*, for all you newbies).*

I just wanted to drop you a line and tell you #0 was great. I just picked it up this weekend, and I could not put it down until I'd read it at least 2 times.

**KEN DAVIS**





# Way of the World

What follows is the beginning of the prologue to *Way of the World*, the next major *Hepcats* graphic novel. It shoots us slightly into the future and well ahead of Joey & Gunther's college days at the end of the '80s. This prologue runs 40 pages and will be serialized in 4-page chunks in the back of issues 1-12, with the exception of issues 3 and 11. It will also be published in its own edition in December, 1997 for the benefit of old *Hepcats* who don't wish to repurchase the reprints of issues 1-12 just to obtain the backups. The full novel will run over 700 pages.



# prologue

Monday, Jan. 18, 1999

Hi, this is Joey McLyon.

I'm 33 years old and I've never kept a "journal" or a "diary" before in my life.



Mainly it's probably because when I was a kid keeping diaries was something girls did. (I know my sister Rachael keeps one.)



Also it's been because I've always just lived for today, too.

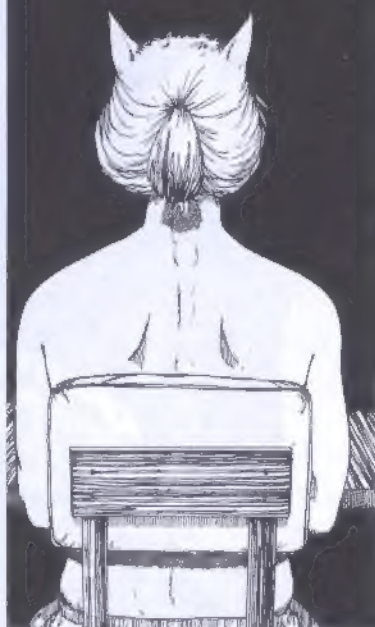


I never felt the need to talk to myself in some little book I keep hidden or reflect on my thoughts about anything.

So why now?



Is it just because it's freezing cold outside and I'm stuck in here with nothing really worth watching on cable?



(The cable thing's kind of a given, actually.)





No. I've just been doing a lot of thinking lately, which is a good thing to do no matter what your age is although you tend to do a lot more of it once you pass that "30" threshold, I've noticed.

I mean, for the last two weeks it's been on my mind how amazing it is that in less than a year we'll be in the 21st century! Less than a year, for God's sake. Wow! It's like an event that every living person in the world has been waiting all their lives for.

It's been talked about, wondered about, there's all kinds of crazy bullshit end of the world predictions going on. (I don't know how the checkout tabloids are going to stay in business once the year 2000 gets here and the world doesn't blow up and Jesus doesn't come. Some people are actually going to be pissed off that we all don't die. Go figure. I say if they wanna get to heaven so bad why don't they just shoot themselves?)

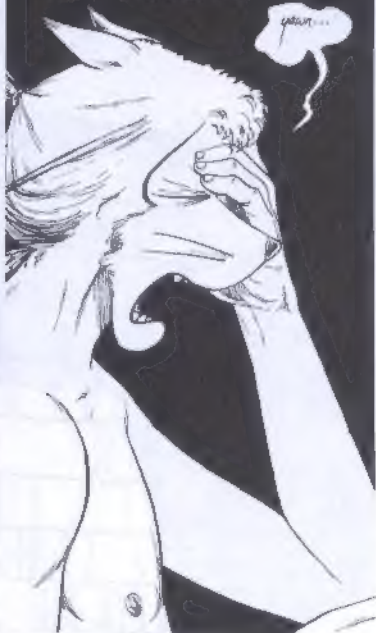
Oh yeah. There's this guy at work who keeps trying to tell us the 21st century doesn't actually start until the year 2001 because there was never a year zero. I said "How do you know?" He said "There just wasn't." I said "They didn't invent our calendar until the middle ages anyway. So are you saying somebody who's 20 years old is still a teenager?" He mumbled something. I've decided my new year's resolution for 1999 is to stop asking stupid people to make sense.



So where was I? Oh yeah. Basically I've thought about my life, and I'm not happy. Now I'm not unhappy, depressed, full of self-pity or any of that crap.



No, it's just that I know I need a change, and I think the last year of the 20th century is a momentous kind of year to make a change in. I mean, sure, I could be farther along in life (career, etc.) than I am now.



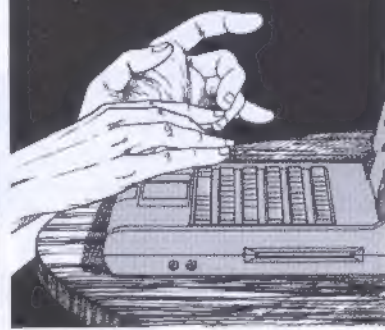
But is that what I really want? That's what I've been saying over and over.



Like that movie a few years ago, *Trainspotting*. "Choose life, choose a job, choose a big house and a color TV, etc. etc."



No...I've figured that what I need in my life is something a little bit different...





# get it here

Be honest with yourself. You know your life is a meaningless lie until you muster the fortitude to grab that checkbook and get your hands on some of this magnificent Hepmerchandise we have to offer you here! Let the feeding frenzy begin!



**RADIO HEPCATS COMPACT DISC.** Throw those old Bee Gees 8-tracks away! These are the songs all the heppiest people are getting into and off to. 63 minutes of aural bliss from 9 artists. Comes packaged with the limited edition of #0. **\$13.00 US/\$16.50 Can./Foreign**



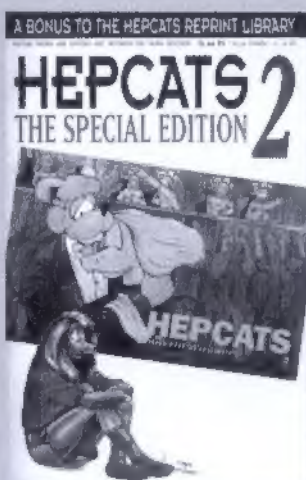
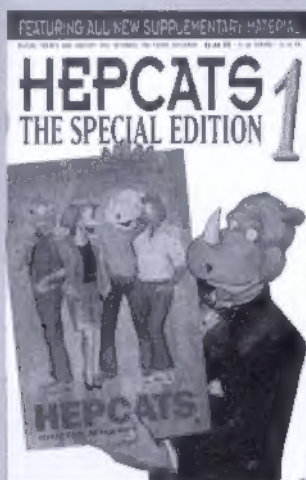
**SNOWBLIND, PART ONE PAPERBACK GRAPHIC NOVEL.** This stunningly assembled collection includes issues #3-#10, the first half of Martin's wildly acclaimed story of Erica. First printing still in stock. **\$18.95 US/\$23.95 Can./Foreign**



**STORIES WITH ANIMAL MAGNETISM T-SHIRT.** Highly detailed white-on-black design gave the silk-screeners fits; sorry, shorties, it's only available in XL. **\$20 US/\$26 Can./Foreign**



**PORTFOLIO PRINT SERIES** Previously available only on the Hepcats web page, this is a set of five full-size, 11"x14" B&W (not color) reproductions of art from Hepcats #0. Autographed and numbered by Martin! Only 200 sets available, so act fast! **\$12 US/\$15 Can./\$20 Foreign**



**ORIGINAL DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS EDITIONS** Martin self-published a dozen issues before coming aboard at AP, and you collectors and curiosity seekers can still get some. These all feature art, covers, letters, and miscellaneous stuff that won't be in the AP versions, and quantities (especially of #11 and #12) are limited.  
**HEPCATS 1 SPECIAL EDITION**  
**\$6.95 US/\$10 Can./Foreign**  
**HEPCATS 2 SPECIAL EDITION**  
**\$5.95 US/\$9 Can./Foreign**  
**HEPCATS 11 (not pictured)**  
**\$6.95 US/\$10 Can./Foreign**  
**HEPCATS 12**  
**\$6.95 US/\$10 Can./Foreign**

ALL PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE & HANDLING.  
CANADIAN ORDERS MUST BE POSTAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY (sorry).  
FOREIGN ORDERS PLEASE SEND U.S. FUNDS HOWEVER POSSIBLE.

Send check or money order to:

MARTIN WAGNER, PO BOX 27157, AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157

<http://www.mcs.net/~dvoskuil/hepcats>



FEATURING ALL NEW SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

MATURE THEMES AND CONTENT NOT INTENDED FOR YOUNG CHILDREN \$2.00 US • \$2.50 CANADA • £ 0.00 UK

# HEPCATS 1

## THE SPECIAL EDITION





## NEW INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL EDITION

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Special Edition of *Hepcats*! It seems weird to think that, since the summer of 1989, so long ago, that there have been so few printings available of this premiere issue. Constant availability would, naturally, be a surefire ticket to a steady influx of new readers and ever-increasing circulation. Regrettably, as those who have been reading this series from the outset can attest, my life has been anything but that organized and placid. But it's getting better, and with the success of the first *Hepcats* reprint volume, *The Collegiate Hepcats* (which also contains the "Joey and Gunther" story from this book), the process of making this elusive series more readily available to the teeming masses can commence. Everything, finally, finally, is going well. As we move into the mid 1990's (as of this writing), self-publishing has regained a level of stature in the industry—as have alternative comics period. And *Hepcats'* (and my) sheer stubborn longevity has given both it and me reputations as being one of the leading figures in the "next generation." I'm proud to be here.

For those who are discovering *Hepcats* for the first time ever with this series, I'd like to welcome you and hope you decide to stay put. Pick up a copy of the companion issue (H2SE) to this one to get a real feel for things. Basically, the series focuses on the lives of four young people, who at the present time are in college in Texas and dealing with the pleasures and pains that we all confront in our lives. *Hepcats* is generally a slice of life series, though with a stronger story structure than most such tales—however, every now and then the series will meander and wander a bit, seemingly unsure of where it is headed, but always with some goal it is trying to reach off in the blue distance. Just like life, you might say.

Joey, Gunther, Arnie and Erica are our stars. Other lives will be crossed down the line. The stories are funny, suspenseful, goofy, upbeat, grim, life-affirming and tragic in roughly equal measure. And at the core are our characters. As a writer, I am a firm believer that you cannot write stories about ideas, or themes, or messages. You don't end up with stories when you do that; you end up with tracts. You can only write stories about people, and how they deal with the roadblocks that life throws in their paths. If your story is worth a damn, people will get the message. Not to worry.

The first issue introduced Joey and Gunther to new readers. If you are a new reader, you will definitely want to pick up, in addition to this comic, the indispensable reprint volume *The Collegiate Hepcats*, which features all of the early *Hepcats* material I did in my college newspaper.

The second issue introduced Arnie and Erica and is available now in an edition identical to this one.

At the back of this issue is an amusing "history" chapter which details the creation of this creation. There are also extensive introductions and commentary in *Collegiate*, to help new readers out.

I hope you enjoy what you see here enough to want to see more.

The future looks hep.

Martin Wagner  
Austin, Texas  
September 5, 1994

Letters of comment to  
Dear *Hepcats*  
P.O. Box 27157  
Austin, TX 78755-2157  
E-mail: [hepcats@eden.com](mailto:hepcats@eden.com)

**Addendum to this and all future printings:** All references to my first wife in the "Hepcats History 101" segment should, needless to say, be interpreted as "history."



# HEPCATS HISTORY 101

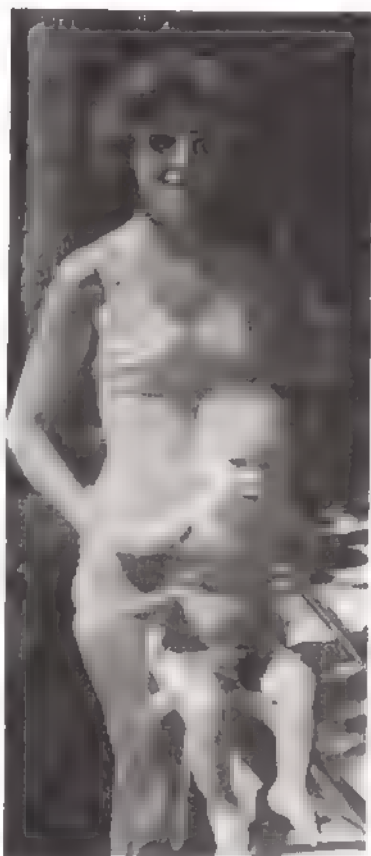
So you'd like to hear the origins of *Hepcats*, would you now? Well, that's fine, ah say, fine with me boy Pull that rickety old chair up to the pickle barrel and set a spell, whilst I wax nostalgic

I was born in Henderson, Nevada, on April 27, 1966. You could probably hit a baseball into Henderson from Las Vegas

I was an oil brat, so we were to travel extensively in the '70s. I'm not entirely sure when we moved to England—1967 or 1968. I'd consult my parents but these are my memoirs, not theirs. I remember bits and pieces, scattered images, such as the night my folks and I drove around Loch Ness looking for the monster, and stuff like that. We left England in 1970, the year a girl named Tifanie, whom I'd marry 19 years later, was born (Sorry, but I enjoy getting rhapsodic like that now and again.) We relocated in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates off the eastern end of the Persian Gulf. Since Middle East maps have become all the rage of late, pull yours out; you'll have no trouble finding Dubai.

Of Dubai I have many memories, such as swimming in the Gulf while a friend's Great Dane tried to ride me piggyback (he was twice my size and probably older than I was), starting school, learning my first swear words (from a New Orleans kid, coincidentally enough), going to a Bedu wedding in the middle of the desert (crazy mofosi!), and many other things. I have to say here and now that Arabs are the coolest people I've ever met in my life, generous, fun-loving, and amiable, and if you're one of these American Patriots who's latched on to the recent war-mania by adopting a jolly sense of anti-Arab racism, then you're an ignorant dickhead unworthy of this comic. Put it down now and get back to your *Soldier of Fortune*.

In Dubai I started drawing. I drew a comic called *The Acme Problem* about the Acme Moving Company and, I guess, its problems. Looking back, I think I did this without ever having seen a Road Runner cartoon. I'm sure none of these comics still exist (which is just as well), but, knowing my mother, I wouldn't even blink if she produced some from a moldy old box



Mom 'n' me in Las Vegas, 1966. *Gloom those shades!*

in the darkest corner of the garage

In 1973 we moved to Singapore. I was drawing in force. I have jillions of memories from Singapore, many of them wonderful, but alas, this isn't the place for them. In Singapore, I and many friends got together a comics line I called the Cheers Comics Company (I even toyed with the idea of using this name again when I started Double Diamond Press), though I think I was the only guy in the gang into it enough to actually do comics. In retrospect I find the following fact funny as hell: that all my characters were stick figures with perfectly globular heads. Now, of course, I was seven or so, which meant all my stories were Marvel-inspired superhero sagas, right? One of the most distinctive things about the superhero genre is the fact that your hero characters have to have ornate costumes. But of course, with stick figures (which I guess I drew because it allowed me to do like two dozen pages a night) the idea of a costume goes right out the window. So

the only way you could tell these stick people apart was by what kind of mask or head accoutrement I scribbled on them. I remember one character called the Bolt, who rode a motorcycle, which had to be goofy looking. His nemesis was Mr Z, who wore a bad-guy style mask like a towel draped over a basketball. Mr Z would drill tunnels underground with his hand-held drill and pop up inside banks and rob them. The Bolt would spring into action, and about three panels later Mr Z would be behind bars spouting foul invective like "Foiled again!" I couldn't get enough of this, and spent night after night on it.

Also, in my first and last great act of flamboyant copyright infringement, I drew the adventures of Snoopy, my comics hero. I actually drew a fairly serviceable Snoopy for an eight-year-old, though I'm sure neither Charles Schultz nor United Feature Syndicate would sanction my stories. In my stories I jettisoned the rest of the Peanuts gang and had Snoopy live (and here, I suppose, is my primordial introduction to anthropomorphic concepts) in a big city called McBeagleton with other beagles like himself. I remember one utterly deranged story I did where Snoopy finds a Coke bottle on the floor of his garage and, being thirsty, drinks its contents, which happen to be gasoline. Wait, it gets better—then he lights a cigarette! So Snoopy spends the rest of the story running around in a complete panic, breathing fire and blowing things up, including other beagles. I think the moral of the story was "Never drink anything if you don't know what it is," 'cause it might be bad for you," or something equally Confucian.

Anyway, after I had been doing the stick people a little while, a friend of mine named Sam Lowrance and I created this concept about a world where there were two continents with two anthropomorphic races, though we of course didn't know the A-word at that time. Once again, I did all the work because I could, like, draw. There was to be one nation of dog-people and one of cat-people. Later, a chum of mine named Gil inspired me to put the two nations at war. Gil was





A rather inane Chester offering from my remembered high school days, October 26, 1983. Inconsequential tripe except for being the origin of my cat designs.

a bugfuck little psycho whom I suppose a kidshrink would, in these enlightened times, say had an "attention-deficit disorder," or something. Gil once kicked a teacher in the shin when she told him to sit in the corner. Gil also loathed, despised, hated and detested cats, in that order, and I didn't like them much either due to my severe allergy to them. Gil took it to extremes, however. I was present on one occasion when Gil snatched one of the stray cats who hung around the school's dumpsters, took it to the third floor, slapped it around a bit, and tossed it overboard. (It lived, though it broke a leg; one of the custodians took it and cared for it.) I mean, nuts! I imagine Gil today is either in jail or working as an accountant someplace.

So the dogs and cats went to war in a comic which bore the most long-winded and ludicrous title in human history: *Silly Willy & Jerky Joe vs. Dangerous Dalmatian & Choochee Chihuahua*. I drew about eight or nine issues of this opus, each averaging 12 pages. There was little dramatic tension, you might say. Willy and Joe would concoct some dastardly scheme, and the dogs, being the good guys and perfect in every way, wouldn't even really have to retaliate, because Willy and Joe were such congenital fuckups that they would always bring about their own failure (like Wile E. Coyote), usually in cataclysmic fashion, leaving the dogs to basically just clean up. I enjoyed this comic so much I kept it up when we moved back to the States for good, to Houston, Texas, in 1976.

Of course, by 1976, I was a sophisticated 10-year-old, so I fixed up a lot of the really dorky aspects of *SW&J* vs. *DD&CC*, and gave it the slightly more workable title *Moondog*. The revamped, mature *Moondog* had broader characters, more action, more complex (if equally implausible) plots, and numerous elements liberally copped from Jack Kirby comics and my

favorite TV shows of the time, like *Space: 1999*. And the cats were now actually sort of threatening, giving our canine heroes something to do for a change. Amusing footnote: I kept the city of McBeagleton, from my Snoopy stories.

Anyway, as absurd as all of this prepubescent stuff was, it did mark my earliest work in anthropomorphics. This is interesting to reflect upon, because I have no particular love for the anthropomorphic genre, any more than for other styles of cartooning and comic art. (In fact, I find several of the funny animal comics I've seen since I've gotten into this business to be fairly lame, relying too heavily on goofy gags as opposed to character and plot.) I only regularly read one "furry" title, *Usagi Yojimbo* (*Cerebus* doesn't count), and I like that book for Stan Sakai's writing and art, not for the fact it has sword-wielding rabbits and rhinos. I suppose I've just kept it up with these sorts of characters because they're extremely pleasant and enjoyable to draw personally. And recently, I've discovered another reason to do these characters, even in the contemporary dramatic settings I put them in now in *Hepcats*, and this comes from the great patriarch of animation, Chuck Jones, who wrote in his autobiography *Chuck Amuck*, "It is easier to humanize animals than it is to humanize humans." Enough said.

*Moondog* eventually fizzled, as I outgrew the concept about 23 pages into the 64-page epic I had been working on off and on, and I entered the doldrums of adolescence, trudging through junior high and high school, drawing virtually nothing for a six year period or so. Then, in 1983, having just become the editor of the high school paper, I got this idea to do a comic strip for the paper. I called it *Chester*, because the name of my school was Westchester (which had, incidentally, been attended by a fellow named

Berkeley Breathed some years before), and since our mascot was the wildcat, my characters. You get the idea.

This time I found inspiration from *Doonesbury* and *Bloom County*, a style I'd work in for some time, since I really admired those strips' dry gag delivery. I drew maybe four *Chester*s total, then high school faded into ugly memory: college came, and, for a few more years, no more drawing.

Then, in the fall of 1986, as I was starting my fifth semester at the University of Houston—University Park, I got that same funny itch again. Bored with the school and basically just marking time until my transfer to the University of Texas at Austin could go through, I took a week's worth of a strip entitled *Shasta Says* to the offices of the *Daily Cougar*, whose editor said, "Yeah, we'll try it." So they did. And the rest, as they say, was HISTORY!

No, no, I won't let it drop like that, Jeez. It went like this. I kept the Trudeau/Breathed style, which I still liked, and since the UH mascot is the cougar (and her name is Shasta—they have her in a glass pen on the campus itself, a gorgeous animal, and I used to go and say hi to her every morning before class), drawing the characters was simply a matter of making them a little less fuzzy-faced than I'd made the wildcats in *Chester*. Voila—I created the style of drawing cats that would lead to the character design for Joey McElroy.

There were no regular characters in *Shasta Says*. I did campus issues, humor, and some of it was pretty funny (a handful of *SS* strips can be seen in *Hepcats* 5; a supplementary *SS* chapter is planned for the sequel to *Yo, Lovestupid!*). One important development in my development started at this time: I began to draw for publication regularly, with a deadline. Though I didn't see any money until late in the game, and then only a college-paper pittance, I consider



*Shasta Says* to be my first professional cartooning work. (There's only one unpleasant memory I have about my U of H days: as I was the only student cartoonist who got positive feedback and hobnobbed extensively with the paper staff, turning most of them into characters, I developed this amazing ego about my work which I'm sure made me insufferable. I didn't shuck it until I got to U.T., when, at the *Texan* working with other immensely talented artists, I got it into my head that I was but one fish in the sea, and learned to look at other people's work with the respect it deserved—and at my own with some humility.)

I continued *Shasta Says* for a semester after my transfer to U.T. in January 1987, since it was popular enough the paper offered to pay me to continue it. But by the end of summer I had had enough and yanked the strip. A new editor had taken the reins at the *Cougar* and if there were one character trait which she was sorely lacking, it just had to be the ol' sense of humor. Earlier in the summer, she had pulled from publication a vacationy on the beach type strip for content she found risqué: announcing she didn't want anything "you wouldn't find in a family paper" so much for the campus press being a hotbed of student rebellion huh? It didn't bother me that she pulled the strip—I recognized her editorial prerogative—but it pissed me off frankly that she didn't have the common courtesy to call me and tell me so, especially since I had put in late hours drawing the damn thing in order to get it to Federal Express on time. But she did it again. The first week of the fall semester she committed an act of censorship so stupid I was reeling for days from the awesomeness of it. I was doing a week of "A Freshman's Guide to College" type strips, and one of them

took potshots at the ticket happy campus police. One gag about why the campus cops write so many parking tickets was taken by the editor with utmost seriousness, who nixed the strip on the grounds that I was trying to libel the police with malice aforethought and get the paper sued. No, I'm serious, she really thought that! Needless to say, I didn't hear this from her. A gal got a call from a friend in Houston who said by the way where was Thursday's strip? Since I had FedExed that strip at a cost of \$8.50 Wednesday afternoon, I called Miss Editrix at the *Cougar* for an answer to that question, and I received the reasons I just related. In a calm voice I told her it was time I moved on.

(Humorously enough the day after I resigned, the Editrix called me up, all contrite just to let me know there were no hard feelings and, regardless of what I might think, she certainly had not been trying to censor me! I chatted with her amicably told her as the editor she had the right to print or not print what she saw fit, and refrained heroically from asking exactly what she called it.)

But I had another reason besides editorial obsequiousness, for putting *Shasta Says* to pasture. I had started this thing in the *Daily Texan* called *Hepcats*.

*Hepcats* was born out of my desire to create a strip with continuing characters, that wouldn't be so issues-related as the Garry/Berke humor I'd been doing previously. A new editor, Sean Price, had taken charge at the *Texan* (I was stunned to discover U.T. students elect their newspaper editor by ballot), and I'd remembered one goal Price had stated on his campaign platform: to recruit more student cartoonists. So I dropped by the *Texan* office in early May of 1987 and met

Price—who happened to be the only guy there; everyone else had split at semester's end. Price told me to draw up two weeks' worth and bring them by when I returned for summer school. And I did. They're the first ten strips that appear in *Yo*.

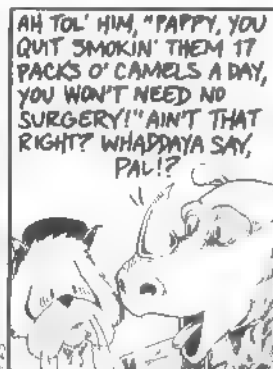
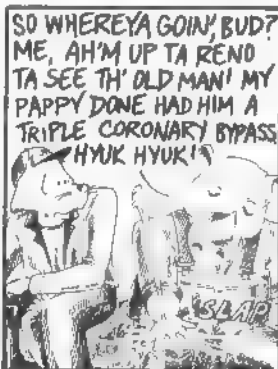
And there you have the long road to *Hepcats* creation. Now a few words about characters before I exhaust my space.

JOEY McLYON was basically my *Chester/Shasta* cat design turned into a single identifiable character. He originally began, naturally enough, as my alter-ego, but that soon lapsed after only a few weeks, as I made Joey more of a Typical College Guy and the butt of much of the humor. Joey began to do things I'd never do, at least at U.T.—like pledge to a frat (if I were into physical torture I'd go to Medellin and become a drug enforcement agent). RORY & JUDY McLYON, Joey's parents, are a real Houston couple. Rory Harper and Judy Miller, whom I met when I was 14 and trying to be a science fiction writer. In 1989 Rory's first science fiction novel *Petrogypsies*, was published by Baen Books.

STEVE GOLD bears no resemblance at all to the real-life Steven Gould, another science fiction writer I met the same time as Rory, and who now lives in Staten Island, New York. But I couldn't resist a few gags at Steve's expense at the strip's beginnings. Busted Bowels is not based on any real tiny Texas town, but elements of a few of them combined. I still enjoy the Busted Bowels gang and am planning a story with them for *Hepcats* following *Snowblind*.

CHUCK WALLACE was my alter-ego replacement for a while until my ambition to become a film director waned and his relevance to the strip ceased. He was a short-lived character

From "Bus Ride to Hell" one of my favorite *Shasta Says* stories, April 23, 1987. First appearance of the Protagonther. *Kiva* is a difference eh?





but I did a lot with him, and the "Missing Microfloppy" story is one of my favorites from the daily strip days, though it bombed on its initial run due to the hyper-tight sequentiality. Anyone who missed so much as one day of the paper was hopelessly lost. It reads much better in *Yo*. A good character—I like the strip where he swan-dives through his plate-glass window—too bad I can't do a damn thing with him anymore. **SOLO**, his punk buddy, was based on a guy I knew briefly at U.T. who also sported a Mohawk and called himself Han (yuk yuk).

**ARNIE** began, I'm ashamed to admit, as a parody of my second roommate in Jester Center dorms, a kid named Tony who happened to be blind. Now Arnie's not blind, of course, nor would I ever dream of ridiculing someone's disabilities in real life. Tony's problem wasn't that he was blind. He was imminently capable in daily activity, as much as any sighted person. But I think Tony felt his blindness was a problem, and this had hindered the development of his social skills. To be blunt, he was pretty much a geek. A sweet kid, but totally inept socially. Especially with (uh-huh) girls. Tony I heard, had grown up kind of "love-bombed," his parents never allowing him to feel as if his blindness was a disability, but this seemed to make him more acutely conscious of it. Tony felt his blindness put him at a disadvantage in the dating game, and he overcompensated, putting off a bunch of lovely girls who might otherwise have liked him if he hadn't tried so hard. I gave Tony all the buddy pep talks I could, but there are some things a guy just has to grow up and learn himself, disabilities or no. So I created Arnie initially as a dweeb who forces his presence upon Joey and, ultimately, makes a bogus suicide attempt in a last-ditch sympathy plea (note: Tony never would've done this). Interestingly, by the time I got to this stage of the writing, I found Arnie was no longer a total dork, a loser, but a character with whom I had begun to sympathize deeply, a character who spoke to the insecurities and immaturities we all have, and have to purge. It was by one of those utterly Murphy-esque flukes that the suicide attempt scene itself ran during finals week, a time in one's life second in stress only to impending nuclear attack, and frankly some on the *Texan* staff were a tad nervous. Apparently, the story was ringing true

in a major way for I even had two friends visit me in my dorm room to "see if I was feeling all right." The day the strip ending in gunshots ran about five people called the *Texan* office demanding to know if Arnie had really done it. I remember my buddy Van Garrett (whom you'll be hearing from, as he's just signed a development deal with Universal Press Syndicate), who fielded all the calls, telling me, "Yeah, one guy sounded really upset!" Anyway, after the story ended and the dust cleared, I knew two new things: one, *Hepcats* had made its mark in the *Texan*, and Arnie was going to be a regular. He is now without a doubt my alter-ego for the comic book.

**GUNTHER** was an afterthought. Joey, quite simply, needed a roommate, and I snagged this rhinoceros character I had used once in *Shasta Says* and brought him on board. In *Shasta Says*, the rhino is an insufferable hick who annoys a character on a bus trip. In *Hepcats*, I made Gunther an even-keeled college kid, but kept the stereotype of the Obnoxious Small-Town Yokel for a guy named **JASPER EUSTACE RAWHIDE**. Gunther has since become many fans' favorite, since he has a lot of qualities that remind people of their own best friends (though no one I know claims to identify with Gunther personally). When I had Gunther sucked out of the plane, an excruciating cliffhanger with which I ended both the summer 1988 semester and *Yo*, I had my second grab-'em-and-hold-'em story, and I knew *Hepcats* had a future.

**ERICA** was created when I looked at *Hepcats* and said "Uh oh. Where are the girls?" I had tried giving Joey a girlfriend or two, but none of them had worked out. It was a lot like real dating. So I thought, why not give the newly mellowed-out Arnie a girlfriend since that would be a really sweet thing to do after how I'd introduced him. Making Erica a topless dancer was just a funny thing to do. To date, I think that story is the hilarity high point in *Yo*. Needless to say, when I began the comic book series, Erica's vocation immediately led to a bunch of comparisons to another dramatic anthropomorphic comic, *Omaha, the Cat Dancer*. Take my word for it: until after *Yo* was published, I'd never heard of this book, principally since the comic shop I patronized regularly doesn't stock adult titles, and is even iffy on mature titles (*Hepcats* 7 which

had some full frontal nude panels of Arnie and Erica—but no sex—ended up behind the counter). When I discovered *Omaha* for myself, I was faced with a quandary: how to approach Erica's dancing. Should I just drop it, and wreck the continuity I'd established, or just downplay it, keeping the continuity and risking rip-off accusations only from those fans too illiterate to see past drawings of tits? I elected the latter, and now that *Hepcats* has gone seven issues, I think the book has successfully established its own identity, having gotten over the early risky stage with Erica with some aplomb, if I do say so myself. One of my fans told me recently, "Anyone who compares *Hepcats* to *Omaha* is fucked!"

One good thing about making Erica a dancer was that it bagged me one. Heh heh. No, all chauvinism aside, I met Tifanie through my best friend, who was, at the time, the assistant DJ at the club where she worked. She read my buddy's copy of *Yo*, and decided I was one cool guy because I had a topless dancer in my strip portrayed in a positive light. So we met, dated a bit, decided "Fuck it, let's get married," and here we are. Yeah, I like this job!

During the daily strip, I never developed Erica as well as the male characters, something I'm correcting now in my first graphic novel *Snowblind*, currently being serialized in *Hepcats* beginning with issue 3.

So that's it. And what of the future? That surprise I promised you? Well, the comic book series means even more new characters will come into play, and old ones we haven't seen in a while will reappear. Rory and Judy and the Busted Bowels crew will return, and I'm looking forward to getting into two very interesting new characters whom I introduced in *Hepcats* 2, Erica's French Quarter friends **MADÉLIÈNE** and **ADRIAN**. They'll play a large part in the second half of *Snowblind*. Also, when *Snowblind* is over, I'm planning a five-issue microseries (*Hepcats* 21-25) entitled *The Freshman Quintet*, five thematically related single-issue stories about Joey and Gunther's first semester at U.T. It'll be the collegiate swan song for *Hepcats*, before the book leaves callow youth behind and pushes off into the real world for good.

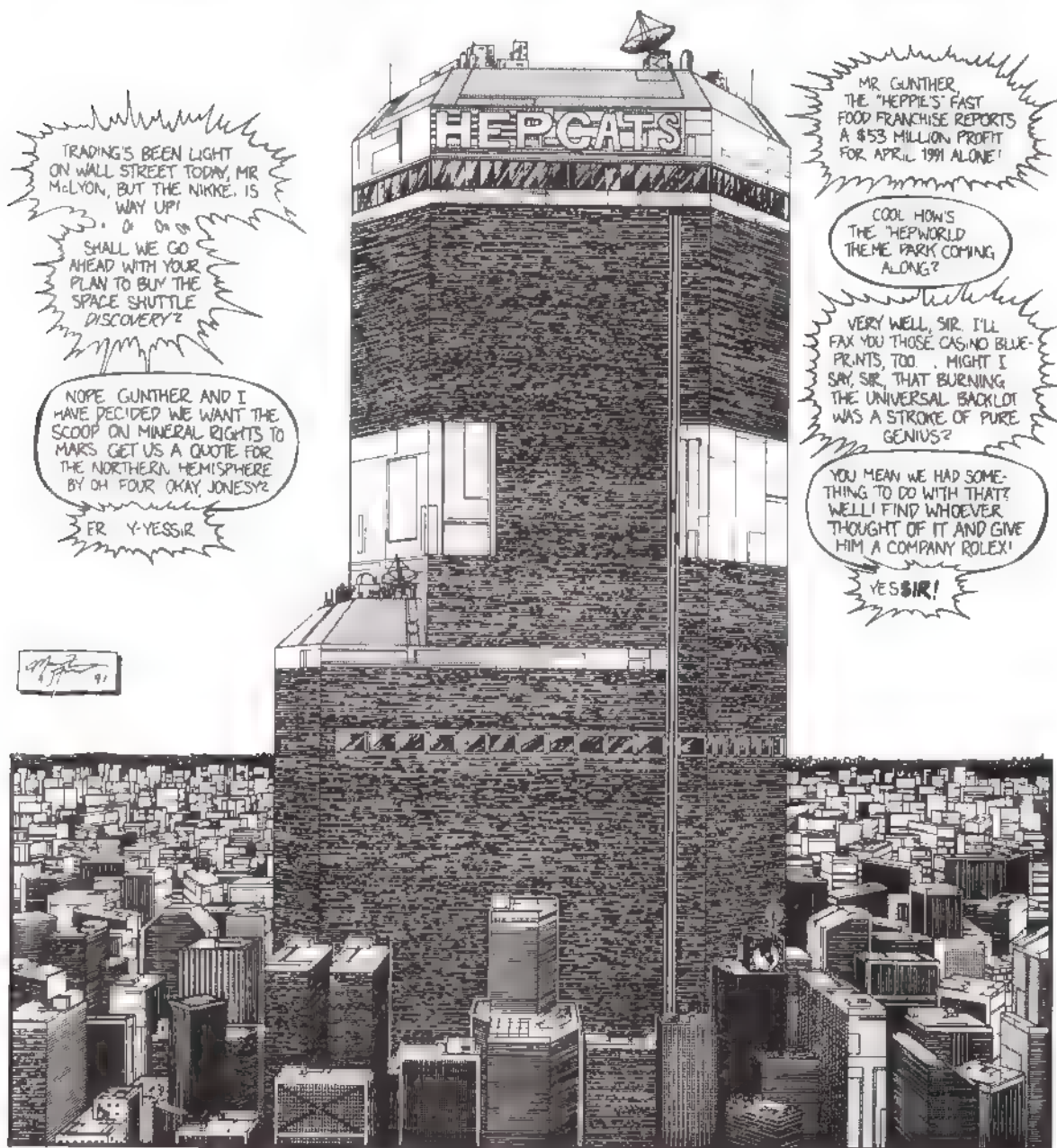
Won't you join us for the ride?

The *Hepcats* and I would love to have you





# WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A WORLD-FAMOUS COMIC BOOK SUPERSTAR!



TRADING'S BEEN LIGHT ON WALL STREET TODAY, MR McLYON, BUT THE NIKKEI IS WAY UP!

SHALL WE GO AHEAD WITH YOUR PLAN TO BUY THE SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY?

NOPE. GUNTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED WE WANT THE SCOOP ON MINERAL RIGHTS TO MARS. GET US A QUOTE FOR THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE BY OH FOUR OKAY JONES?

ER Y-YES SIR

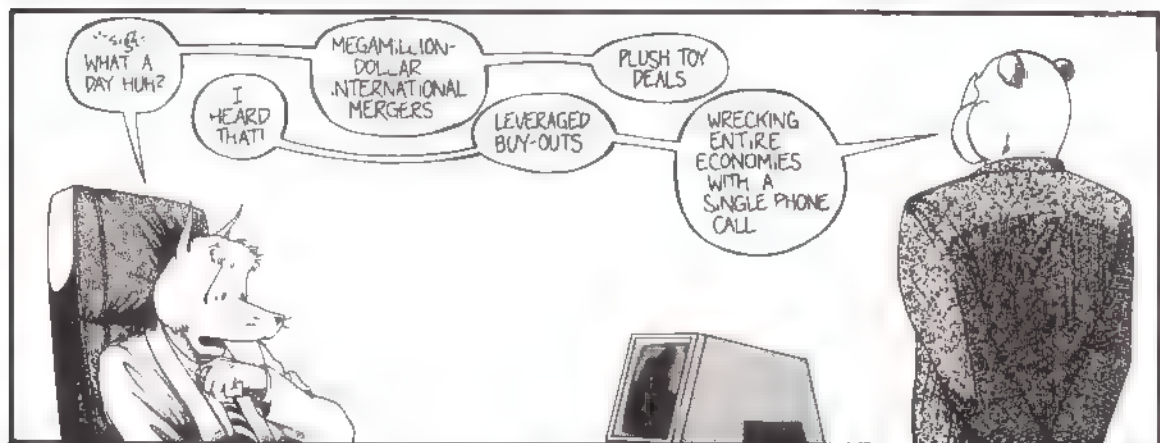
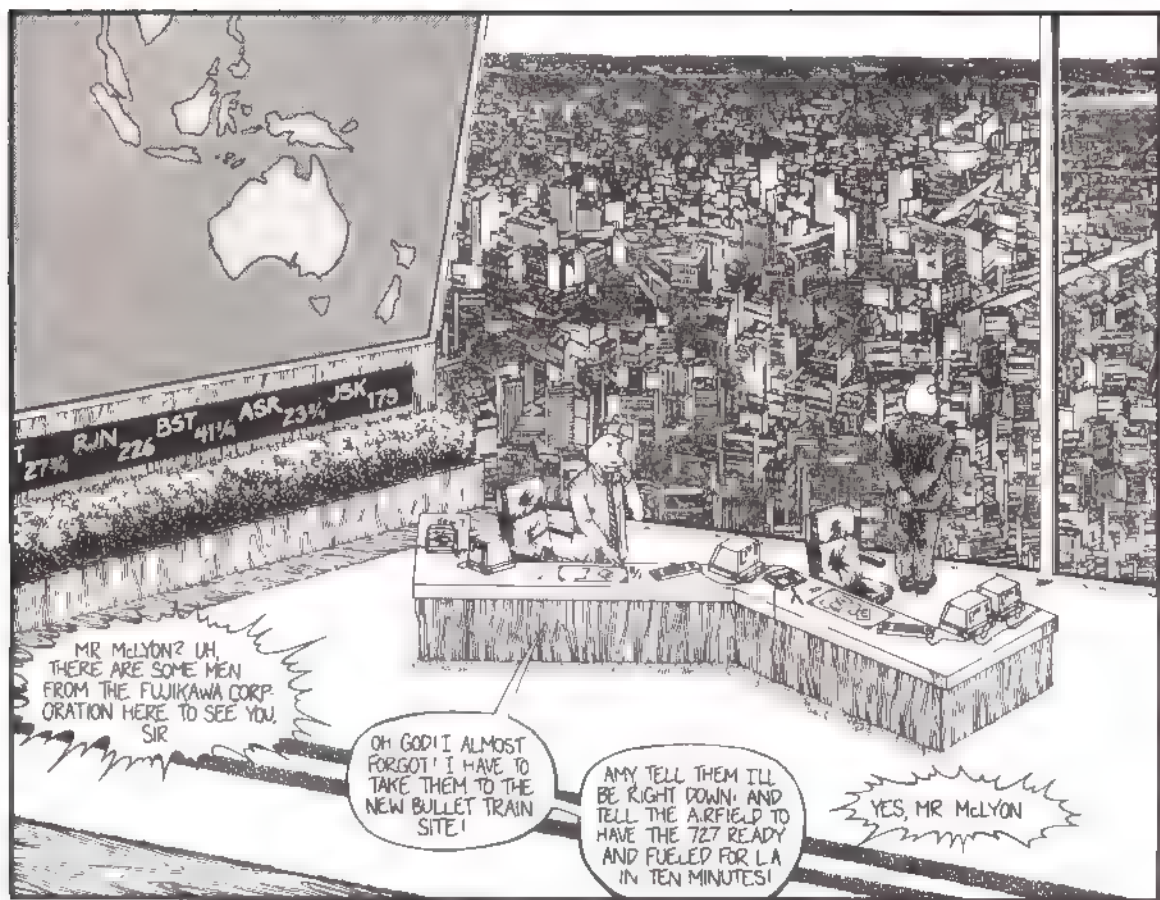
MR. GUNTHER, THE "HIPPIES" FAST FOOD FRANCHISE REPORTS A \$53 MILLION PROFIT FOR APRIL 1991 ALONE!

COOL. HOW'S THE "HEPWORLD" THEME PARK COMING ALONG?

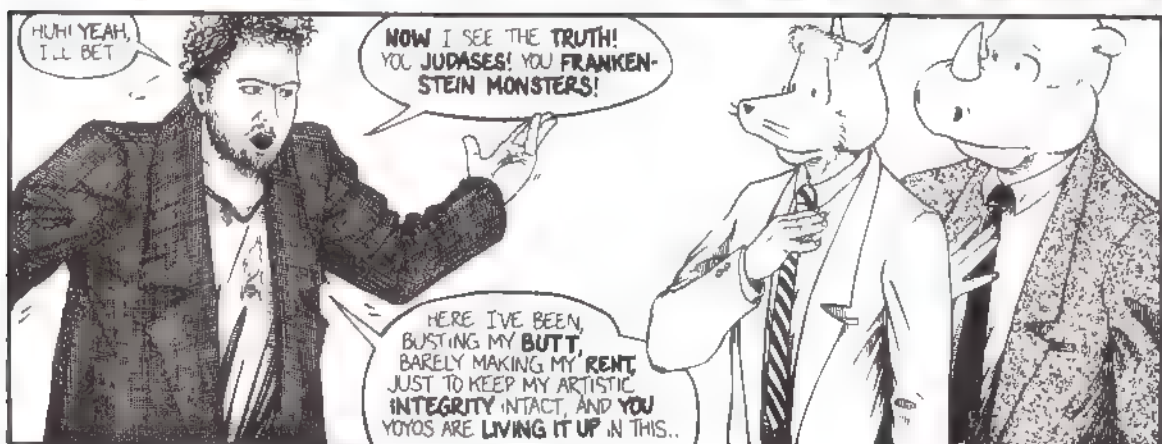
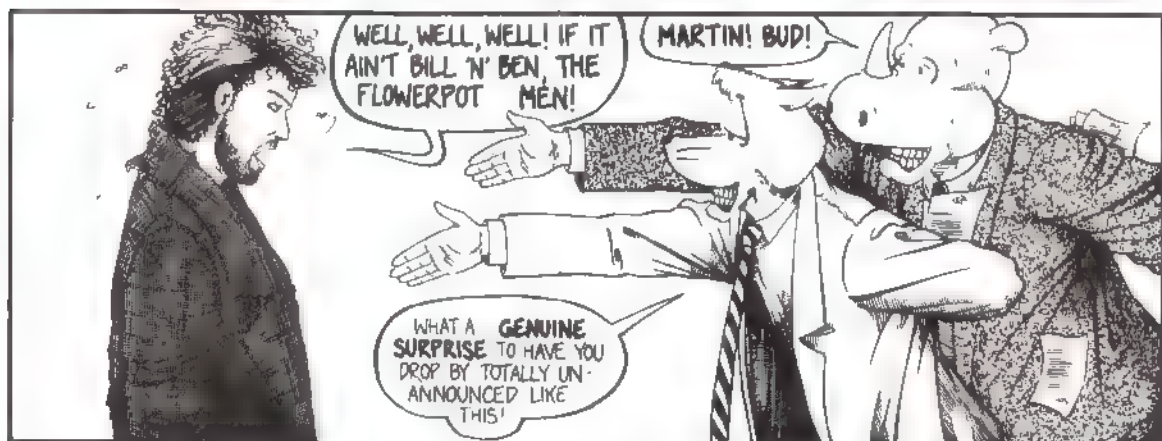
VERY WELL, SIR. I'LL FAX YOU THOSE CASINO BLUE-PRINTS, TOO. MIGHT I SAY, SIR, THAT BURNING THE UNIVERSAL BACKLOT WAS A STROKE OF PURE GENIUS?

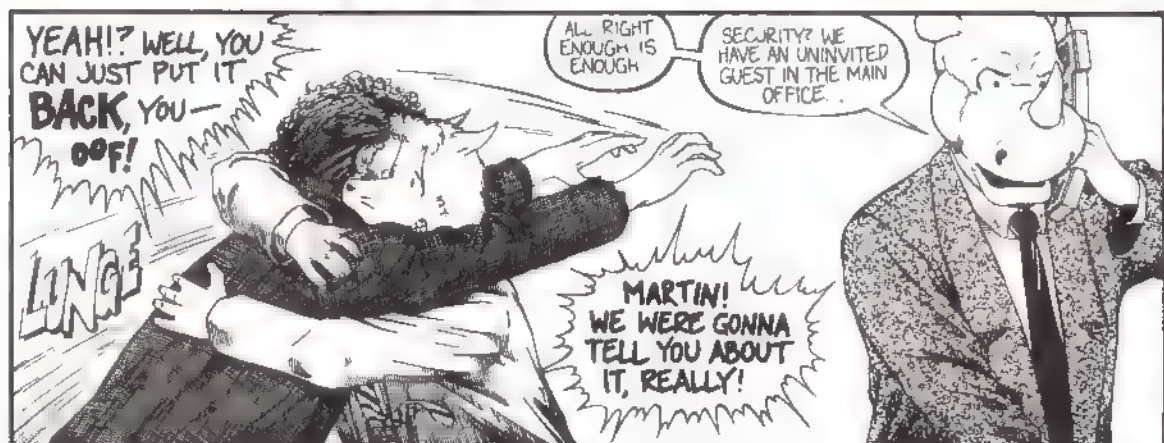
YOU MEAN WE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT? WELL! I FIND WHOEVER THOUGHT OF IT AND GIVE HIM A COMPANY ROLEX!

YES SIR!











*in 1987, a*



NOW THE SOLD-OUT FIRST ISSUE OF *HEPCATS* IS BACK IN PRINT, WITH A NEW BACKUP STORY AND A SPECIAL SECTION DETAILING *HEPCATS*' ORIGINS. GET *HEPCATS* TODAY, AND DISCOVER COMICDOM'S BEST KEPT BLACK-& WHITE SECRET!

\* AMAZING HEROES    \*\*COMICS INTERVIEW    †THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

DOUBLE  
DIAMOND  
PRESS

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS • \$2.00 US • \$2.50 CAN • £1.00 UK



# HEPCATS

*martin wagner*

**1**



# Hi there...

And welcome to **Hepcats**.

I really don't want to spend this inside front cover space talking about myself and my book like so many other independents do. But since this is an entirely new series, some words of introduction wouldn't really be at all unseemly, would they?

So.

If you're thumbing curiously through this book at the comics store, wondering just what sort of comic would run its logo at the bottom of the cover, I'd like to encourage you to pick it up. What the hell, right? At worst you will have spent an extra two bucks this week, and you'll have helped a new guy out. I personally think you'll like what you see and, if so, will come back for the next one.

To answer your question, **Hepcats** got its start in June 1987 as a daily comic strip in *The Daily Texan* at the University of Texas at Austin. Rules of name-dropping require that I mention that such fellows as Gilbert Shelton and Berke Breathed came from U.T., but you know that has jack-all to do with my work and what it's about, right? So I'll tell you a bit.

First, a clarification.

This comic book series does *not* consist, as some dealers seem to think, of newspaper strip reprints. The material in this series is all new and written and drawn specially for the comic book format. (The newspaper strips are available in book form—more on that later). The confusion is my fault; it's the kind of thing I should have made clearer to the distributors. But there you are.

What is the series about? Oh, you know—life, love, hopes, dreams, friendships, memories, goals, failures, successes. Stuff like that. No mutants, I'm afraid. And we couldn't get Batman. But if you like good stories—not to toot my own horn or anything—you might give **Hepcats** a try. Diamond thinks *Omaha* and *Cerebus* fans will like this book. That would be great; I like those books, though my characters don't fornicate with the gusto of Waller and Worley's. I've actually been doodling and drawing these animal characters, or characters like them, since I was 10 or so, so it's kind of nice to see they're actually going somewhere.

I like *Love and Rockets*, too. And *Akira*. And *Little Nemo* and *Krazy Kat*.

Also, there's some fan mail from the daily strip days in the back that might give you an idea. And there's a story before that, too.

Welcome to **Hepcats**. Join us, won't you?

I want to thank all my distributors for their nice big plugs, and all the dealers around the country who gave **Hepcats** a shot. We had a good run for a black and white indie with no track record whatsoever. I also want to thank local cool dude John Nordland for affordable printing and lots of advice on the comics business. John does a sporadic (like, with the frequency of *Raw*) SF/superhero/horror series called *Heroes* with fascinating graphite artwork, and if you see it around you might flip through it as well.

At any rate, I have to let you go now. Joey and Gunther are on.

See you in six weeks.

**'Hepcats'**

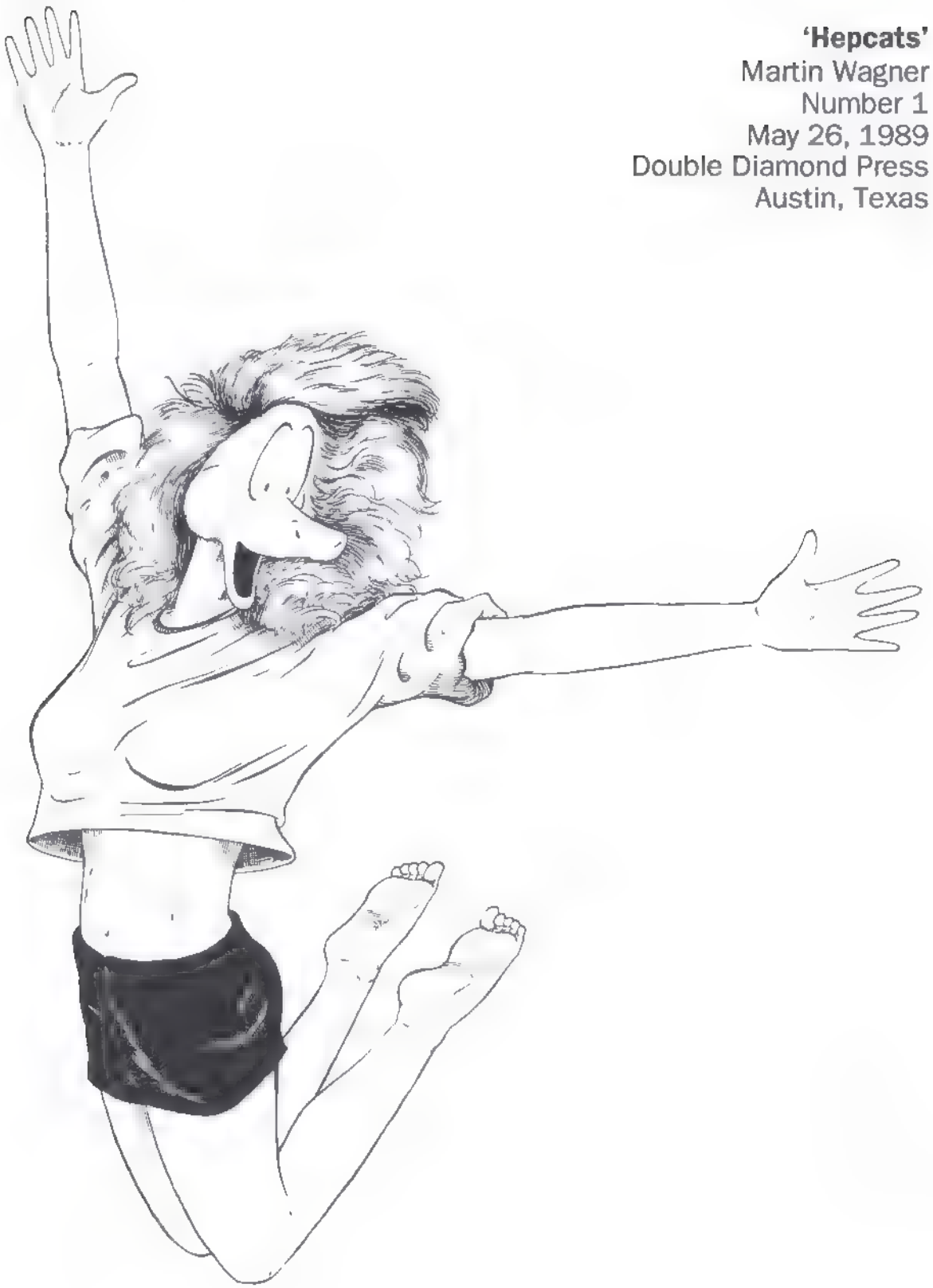
Martin Wagner

Number 1

May 26, 1989

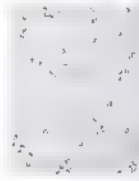
Double Diamond Press

Austin, Texas





THIS IS, OF COURSE, FOR **TIFANIE**



Created, illustrated and published by **Martin Wagner**

Production **John Nordland**

Circulation this issue **6,000**

Next issue on sale **June 30, 1989**

Distributed by

**Andromeda Publications Ltd.**  
2113 Dundas St. West  
Toronto, Ontario M6R 1X1  
Canada  
(416) 535-9100

**Multi-Book and Periodicals**  
4136 S. Service Rd.  
Burlington, Ontario L7L 4X5  
Canada  
(416) 632-5573

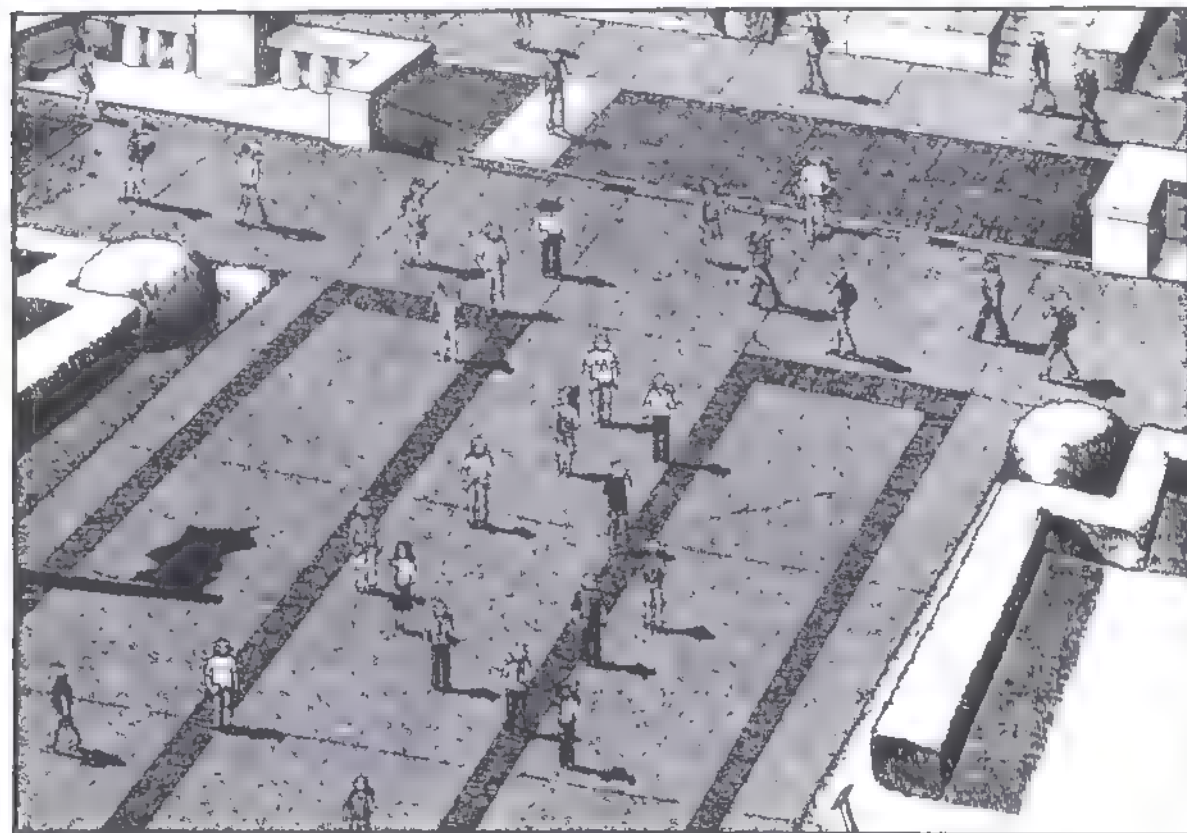
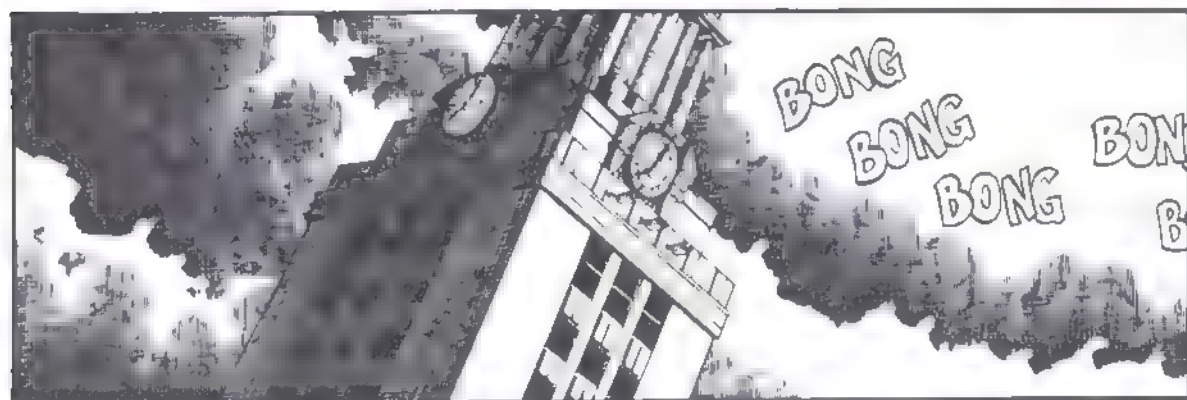
**Capital City Distribution, Inc.**  
2827 Perry St.  
Madison, WI 53713  
(608) 274-8987

**Second Genesis**  
5860 N.E. Going St.  
Portland, OR 97218  
(503) 281-1821

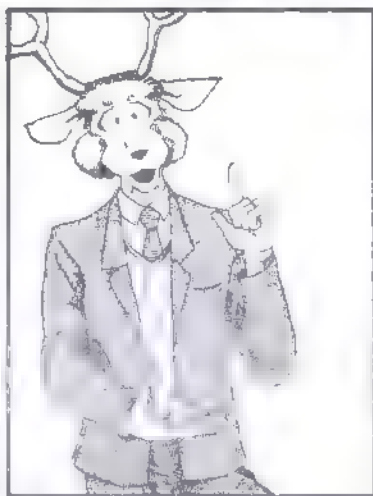
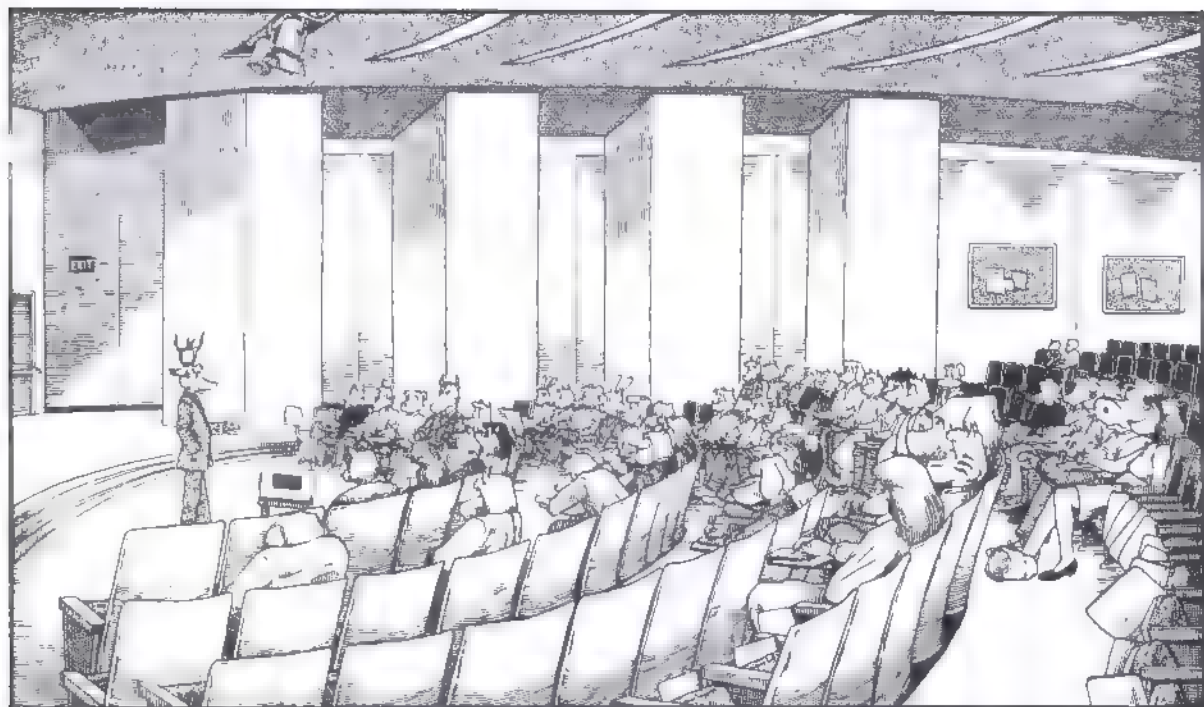
**Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.**  
1720 Belmont Ave., Bay F  
Baltimore, MD 21207  
(301) 281-7870  
FAX (301) 298-2644

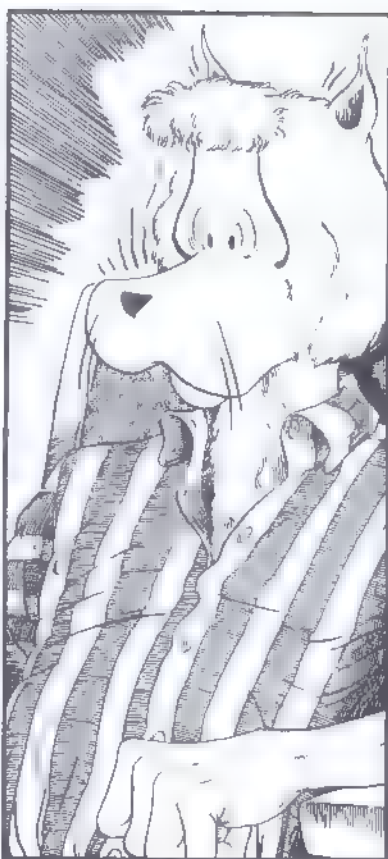
**Styx Comics Service**  
1858 Arlington St.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 1W6  
Canada  
(204) 586-8547

**HEPCATS** is published every six weeks by Double Diamond Press, 7117 Wood Hollow Dr., #1728, Austin, TX 78731. All contents copyright © 1989 by Martin Wagner. The title **HEPCATS** and the likenesses of its characters are trademarks of Martin Wagner. Single copy price \$2.00 in the United States, \$2.50 in Canada, and £1.00 in the United Kingdom. Unauthorized reproduction of any of the contents of this book by any means is prohibited, except by reviewers who may excerpt some panels for the purposes of a review. A great big thanks go to Mom and Dad—you'd better believe it.

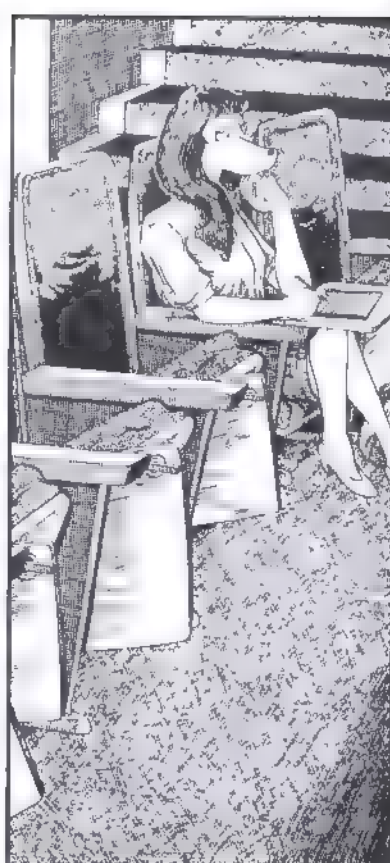






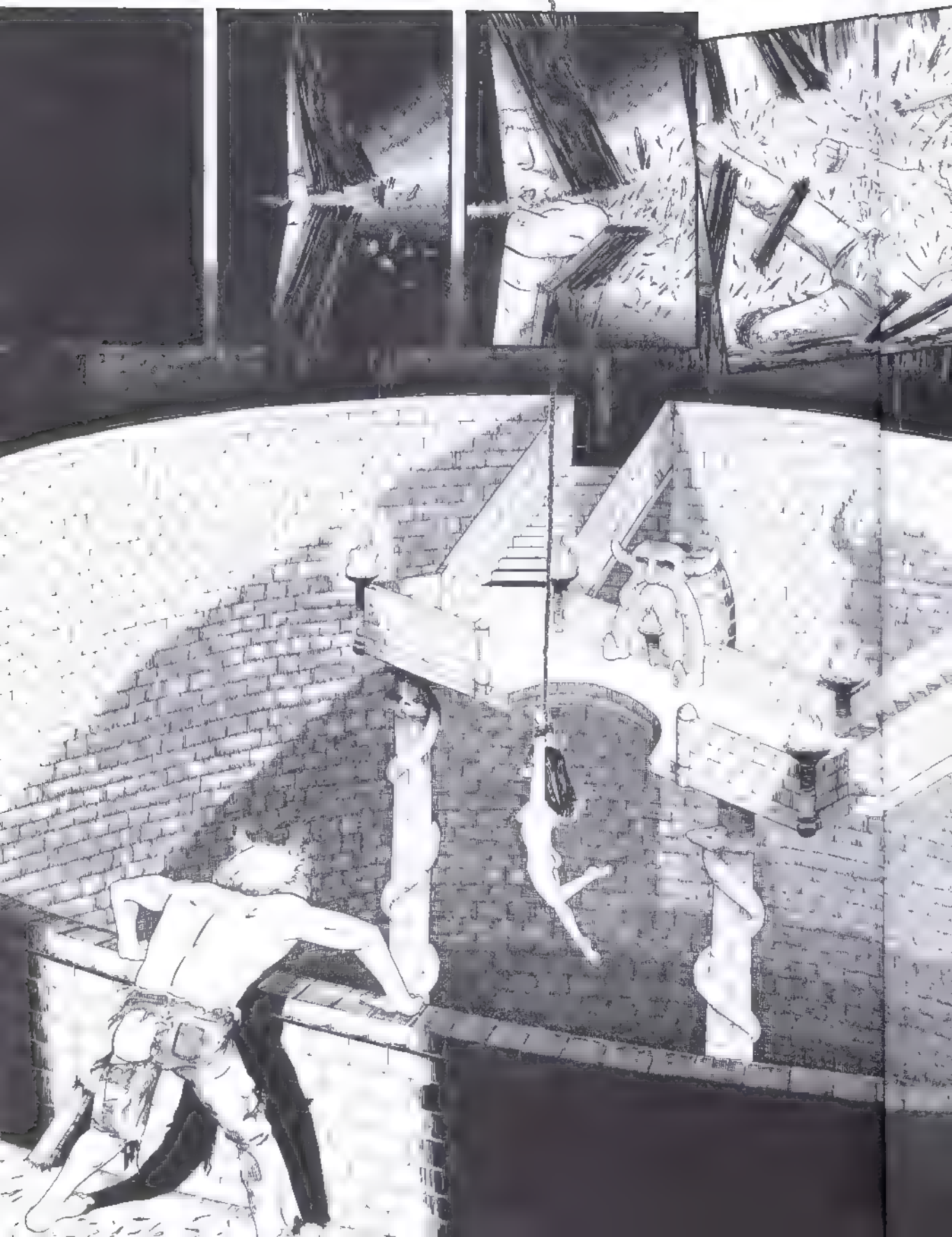




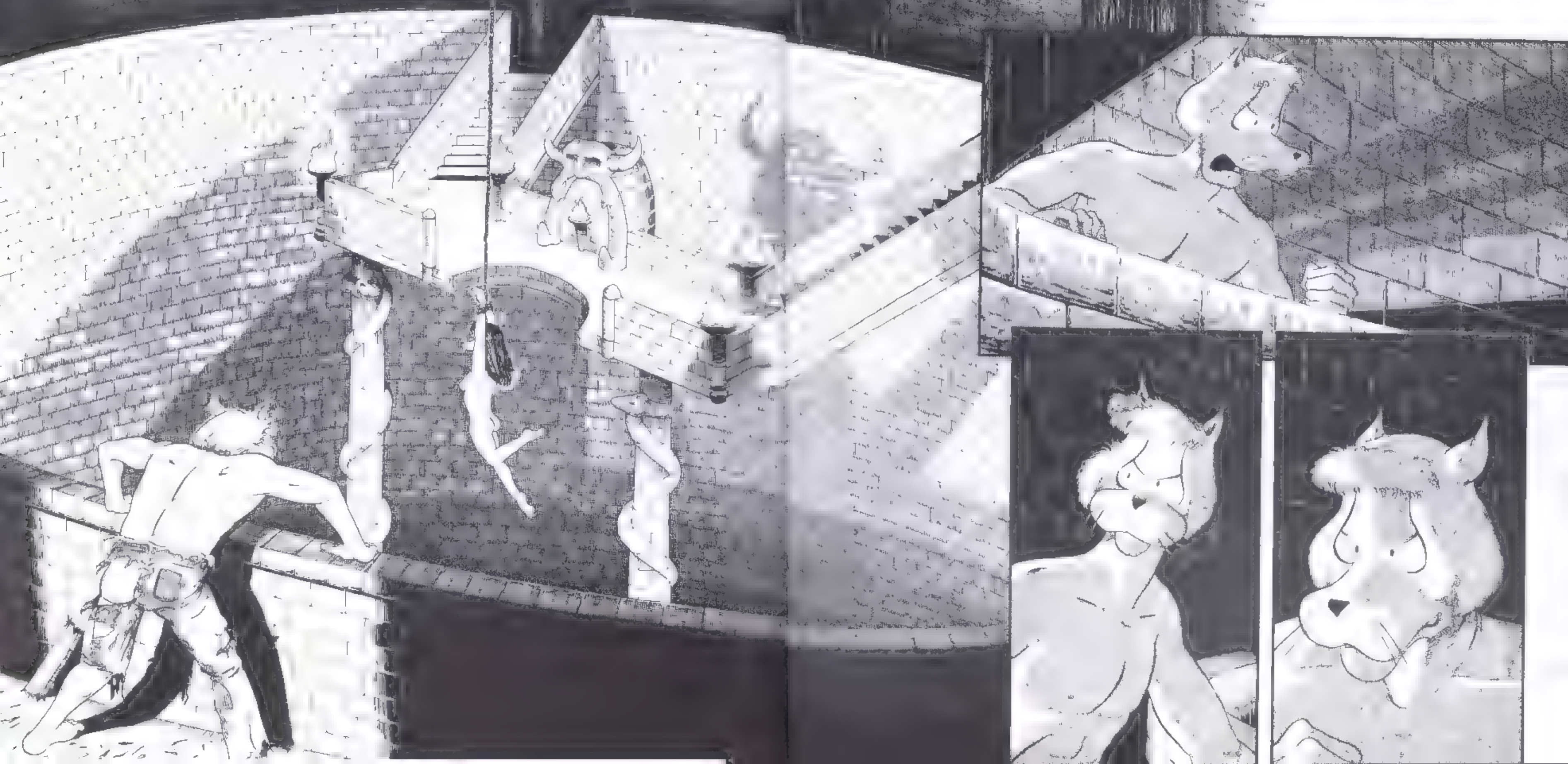




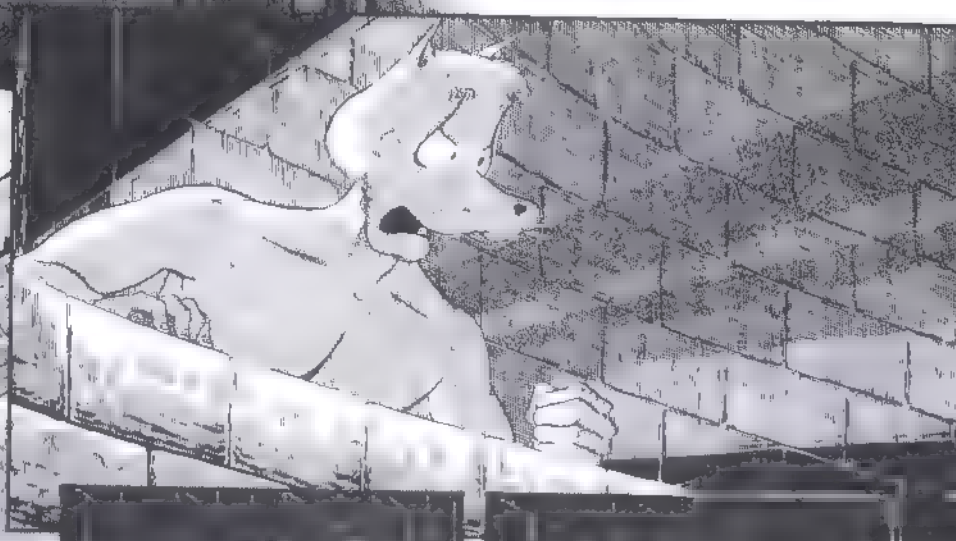
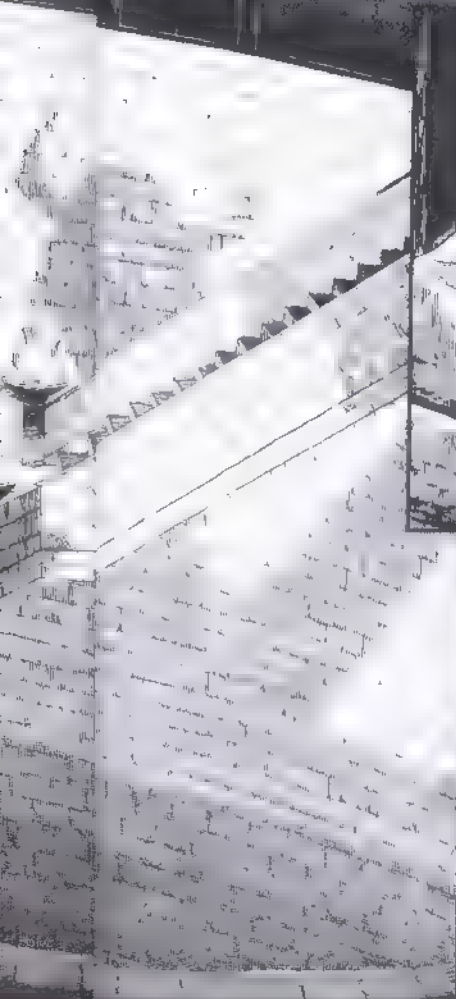


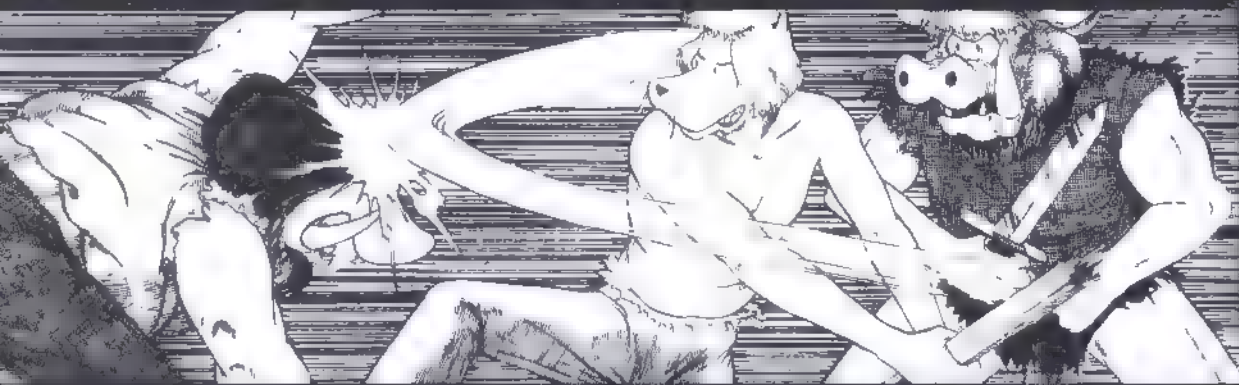
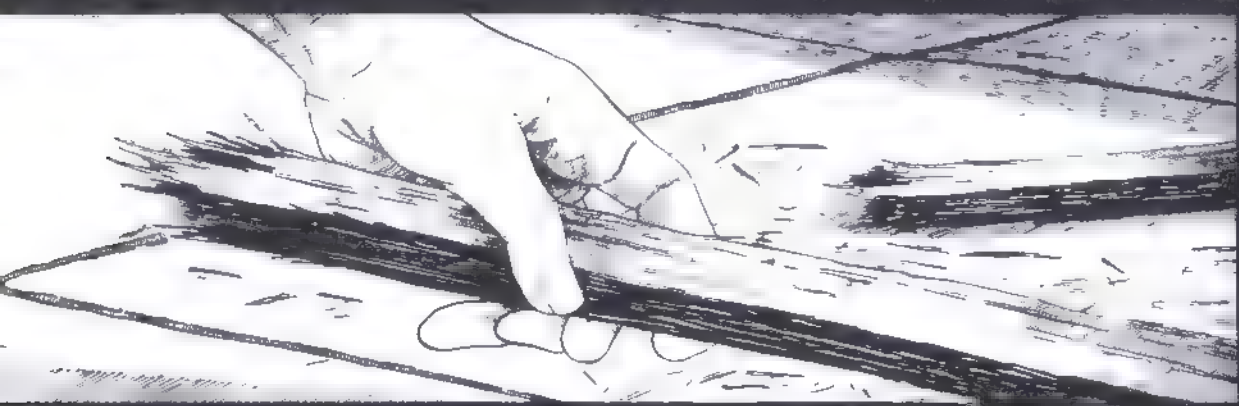




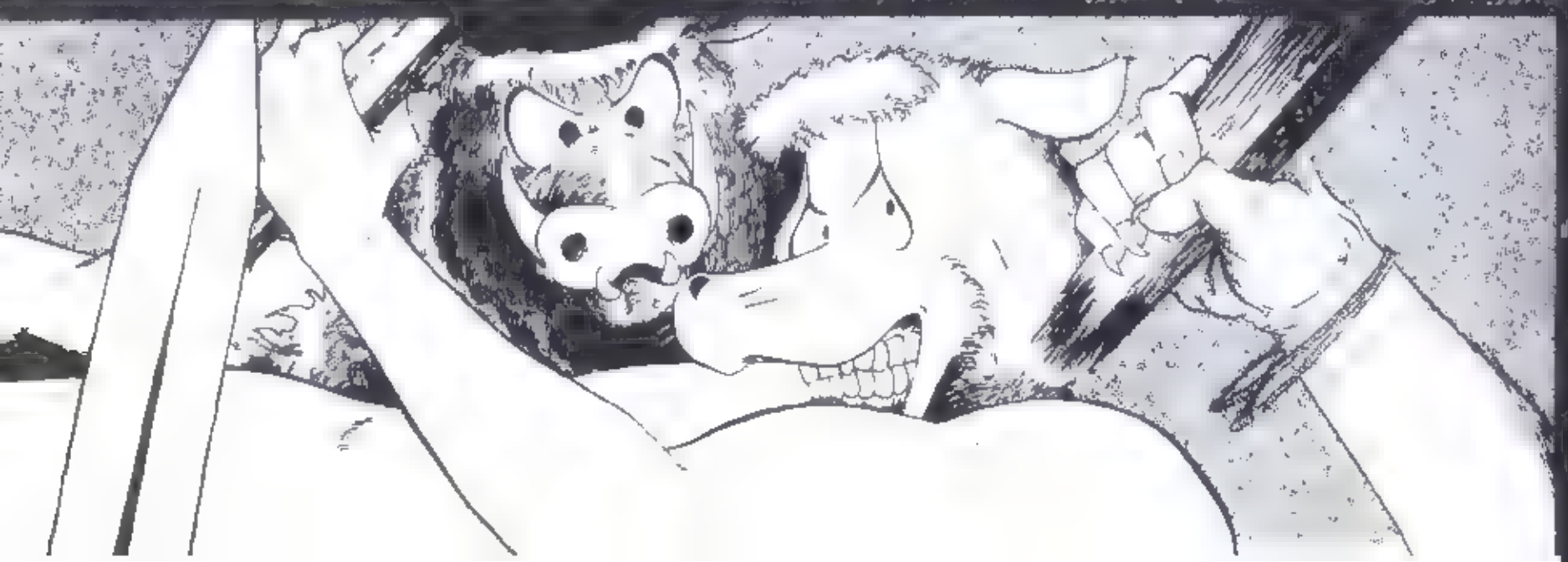








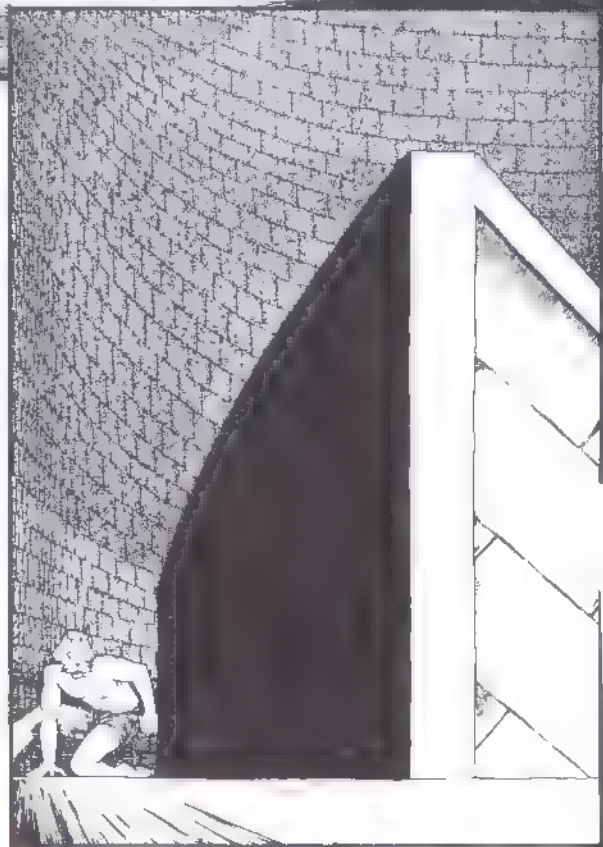
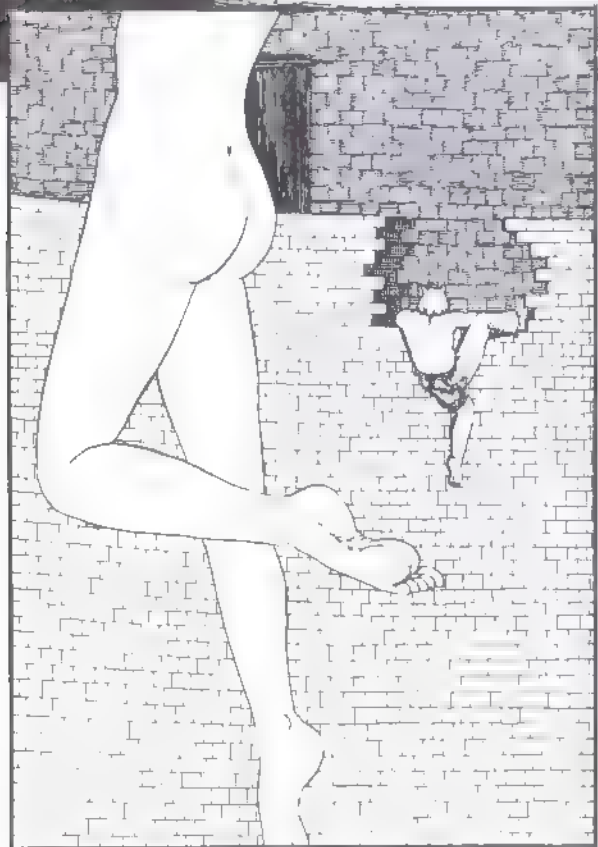
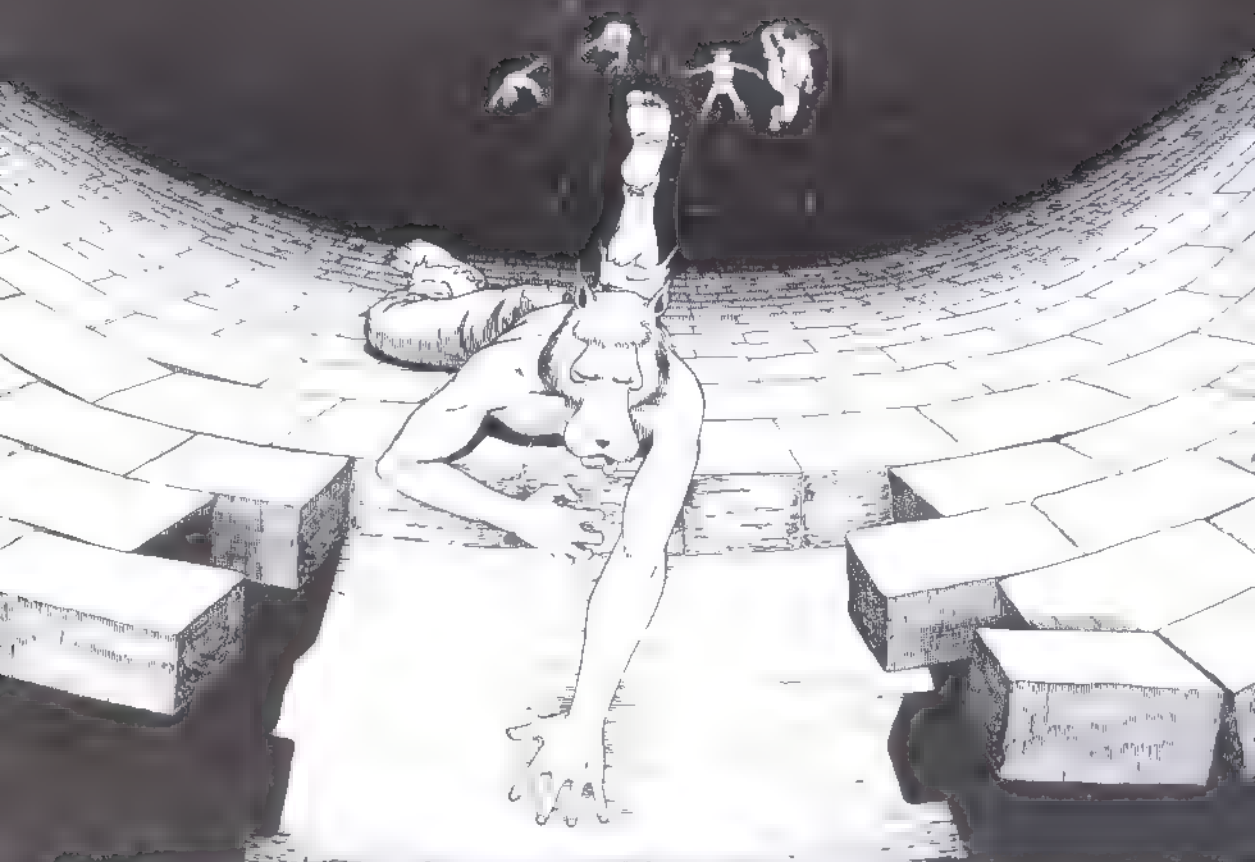






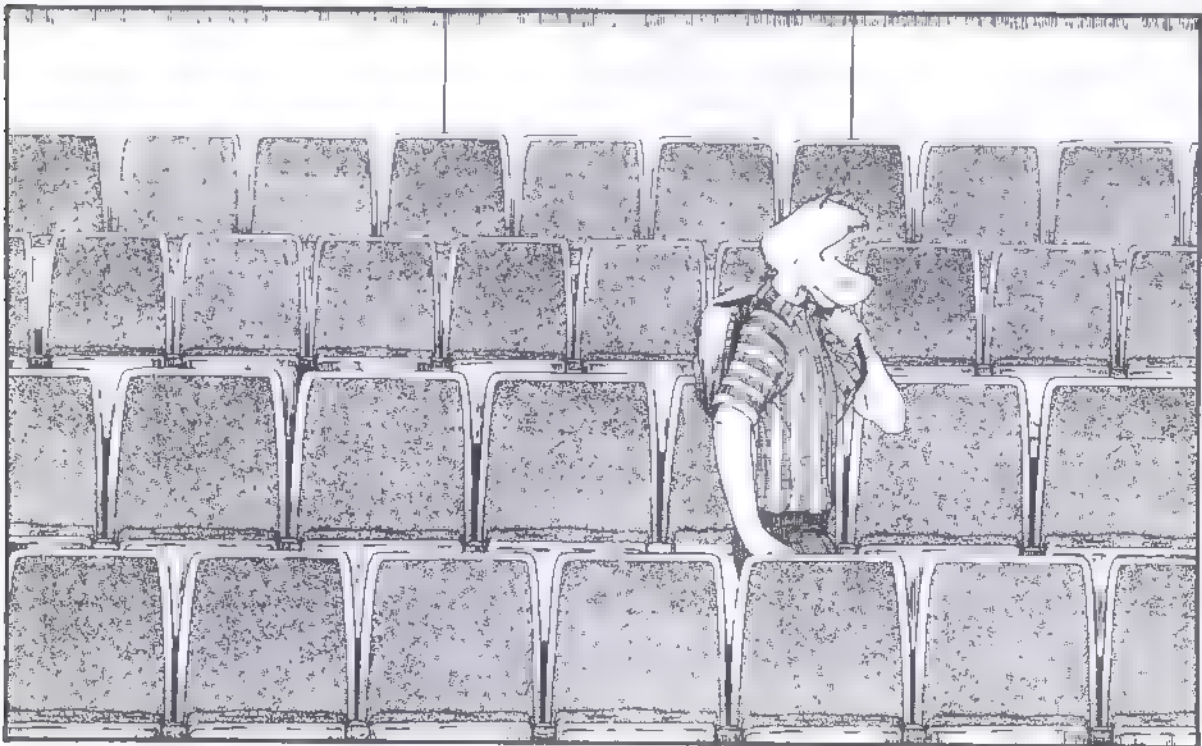
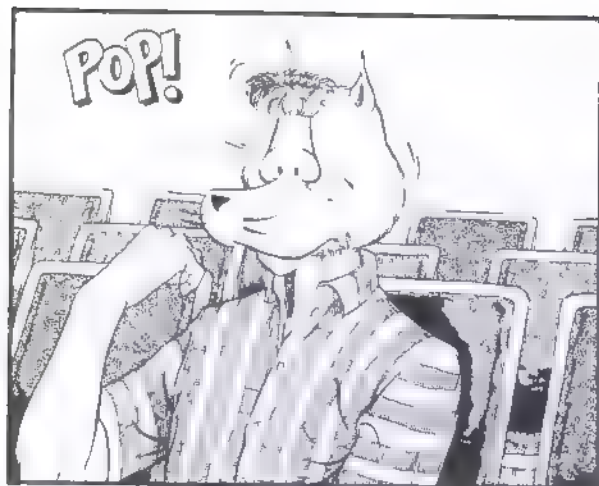


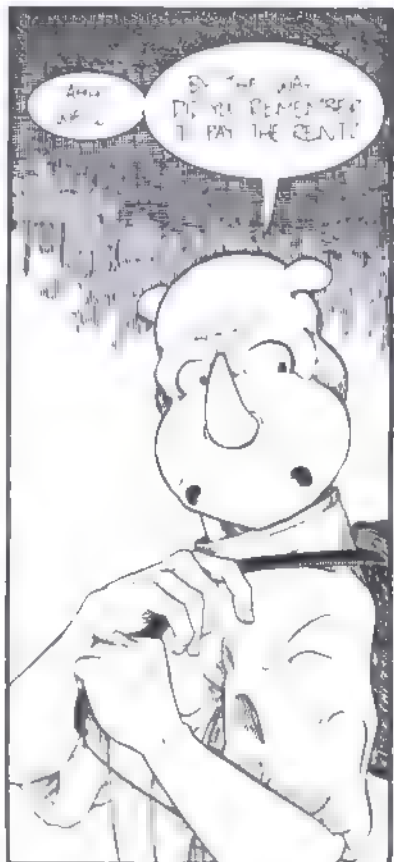
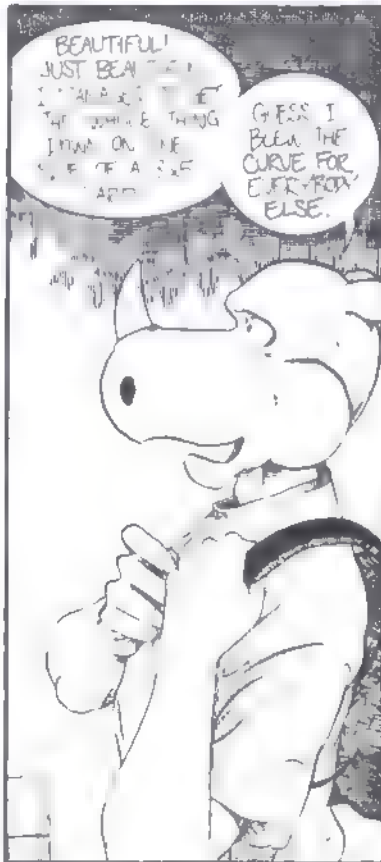
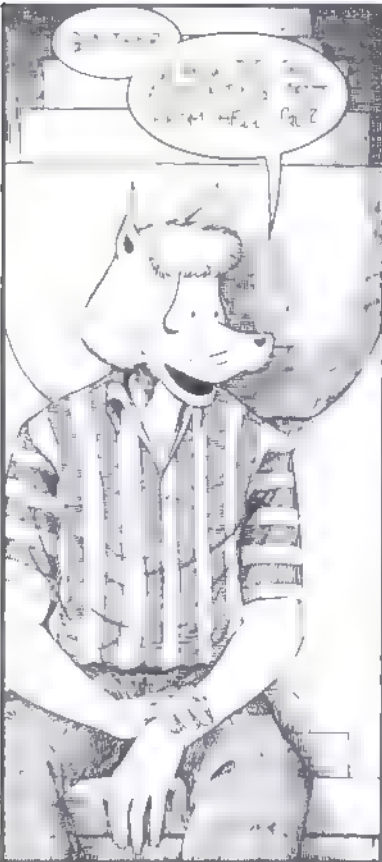
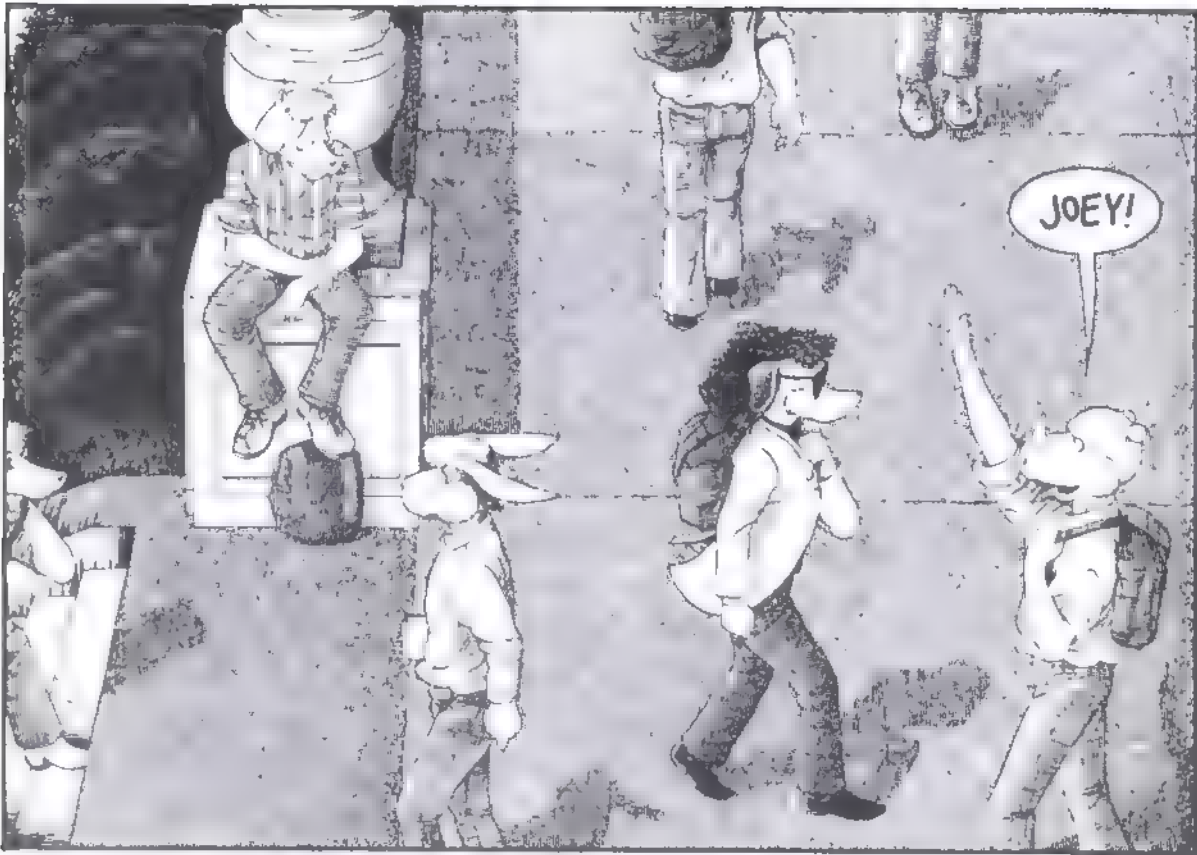




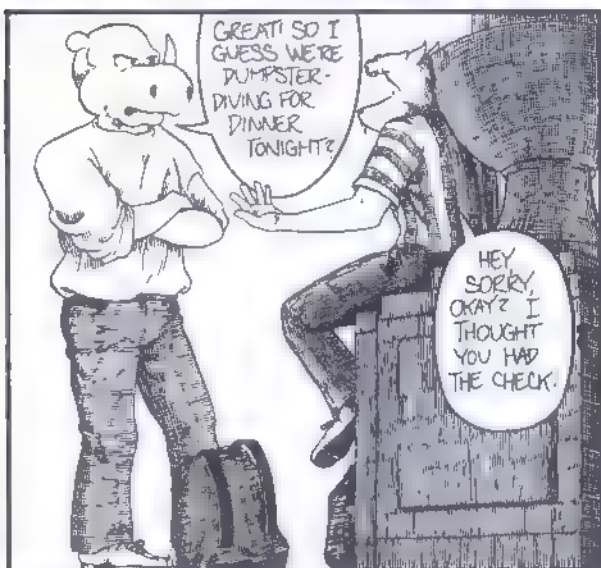


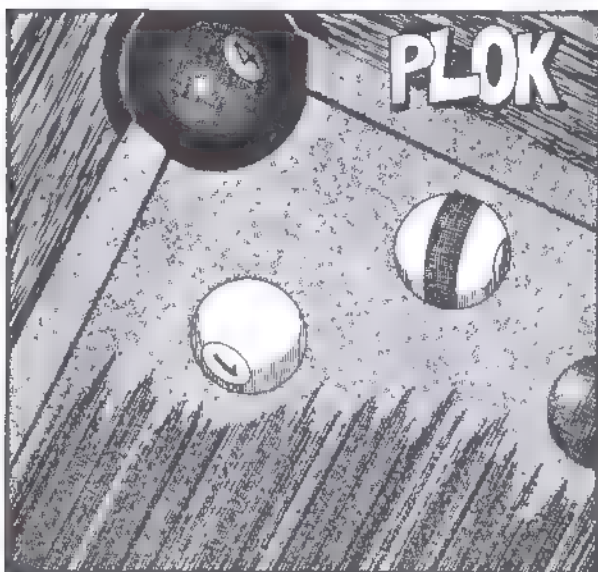
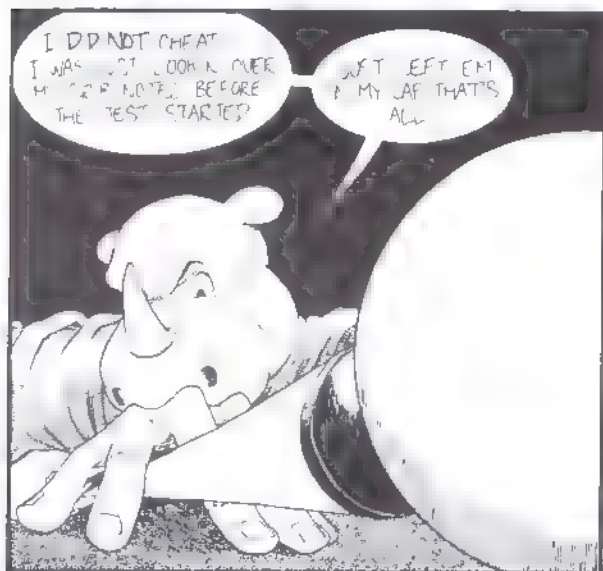




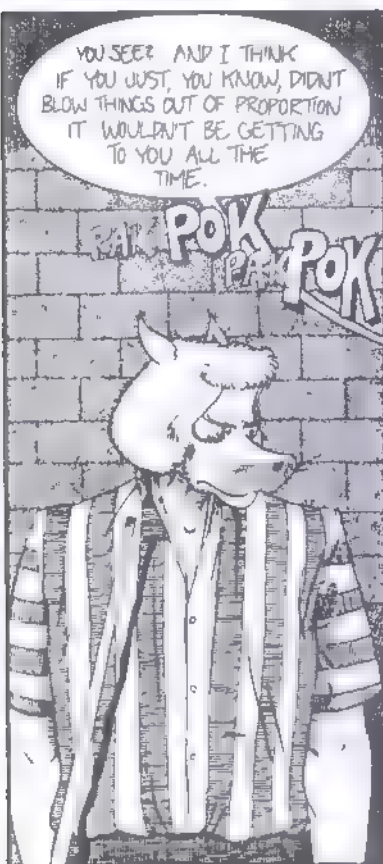
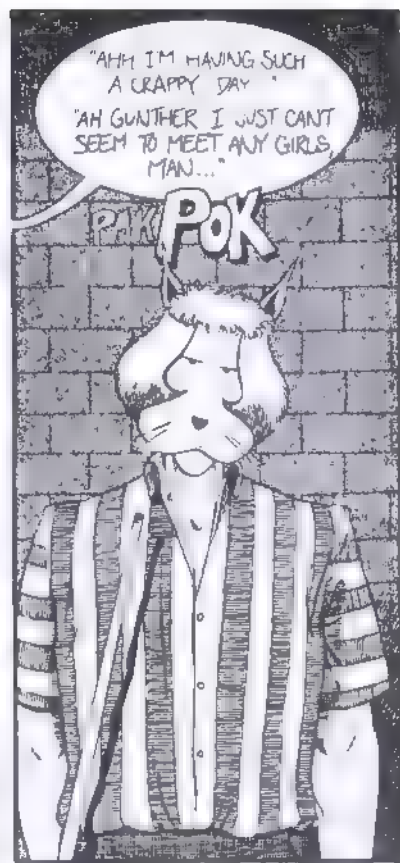


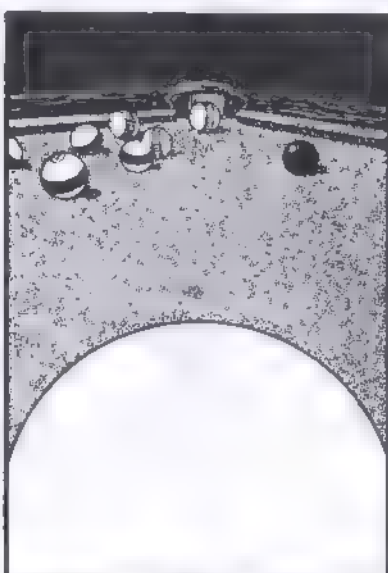
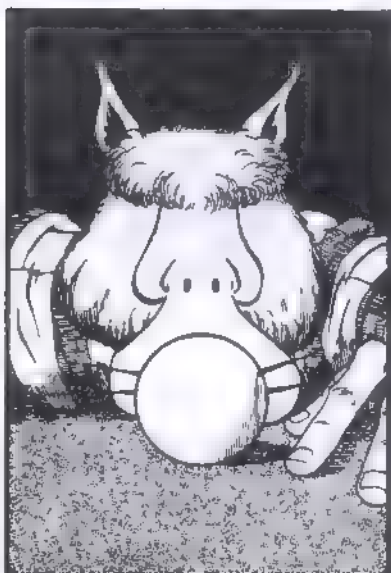
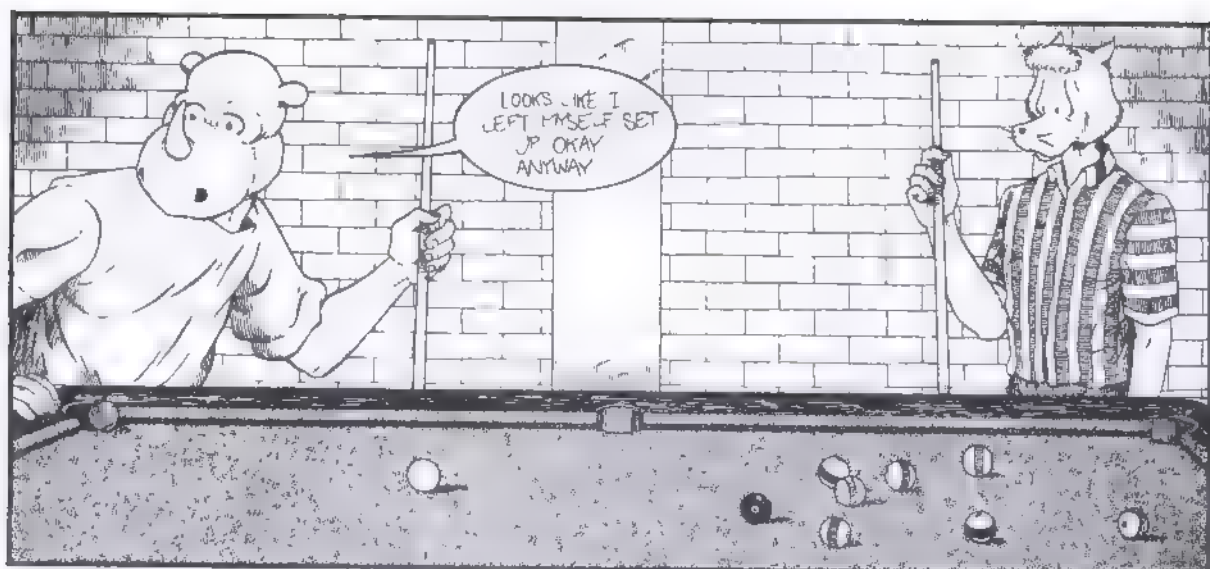














BOK

MONSTERS  
TEARING OFF YOUR FACE!



WHAT THE HELL  
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?  
I THOUGHT I HANDLED THE  
WHOLE SITUATION VERY  
WELL



I GUESS  
SO! WITH WHAT  
YOU PAID HIM  
HE COULD  
PLAY VIDEO  
GAMES ALL  
WEEKEND!

SO ARE  
YOU COMING  
HOME NOW?  
OR DO I GET  
TO EAT  
SOMETHING  
OTHERN  
MICROWAVE  
JEALOUSITY  
TONIGHT?

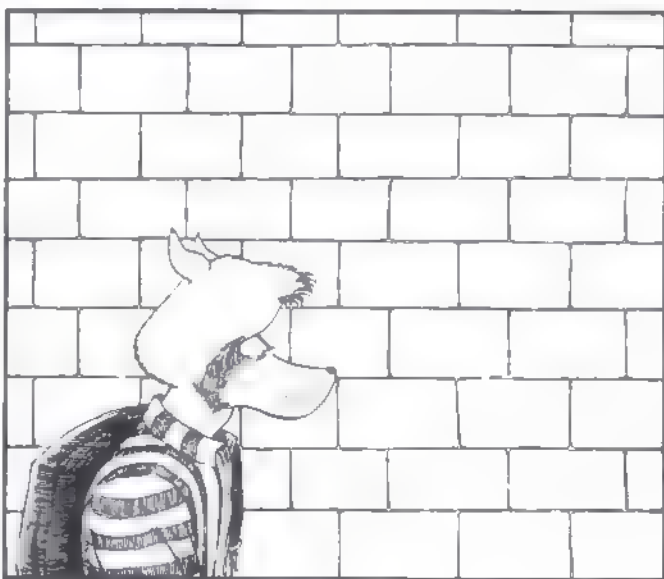
NO, ACTUALLY!  
I'M GOING TO THE  
LIBRARY AND STUDYING SO  
THAT I DON'T HAVE TO  
USE "CRIB NOTES"  
OK, MY TEST

OOO I'M GOING  
TO GO SLIP OUR REAR  
CHICK UNDER THE  
MANAGERS DOOR.



WELL HEY, DON'T  
FORGET TO WRITE  
"IT'S ALL JOEY'S FAULT"  
IN THE MEMO BLANK!

OKAY  
I WON'T



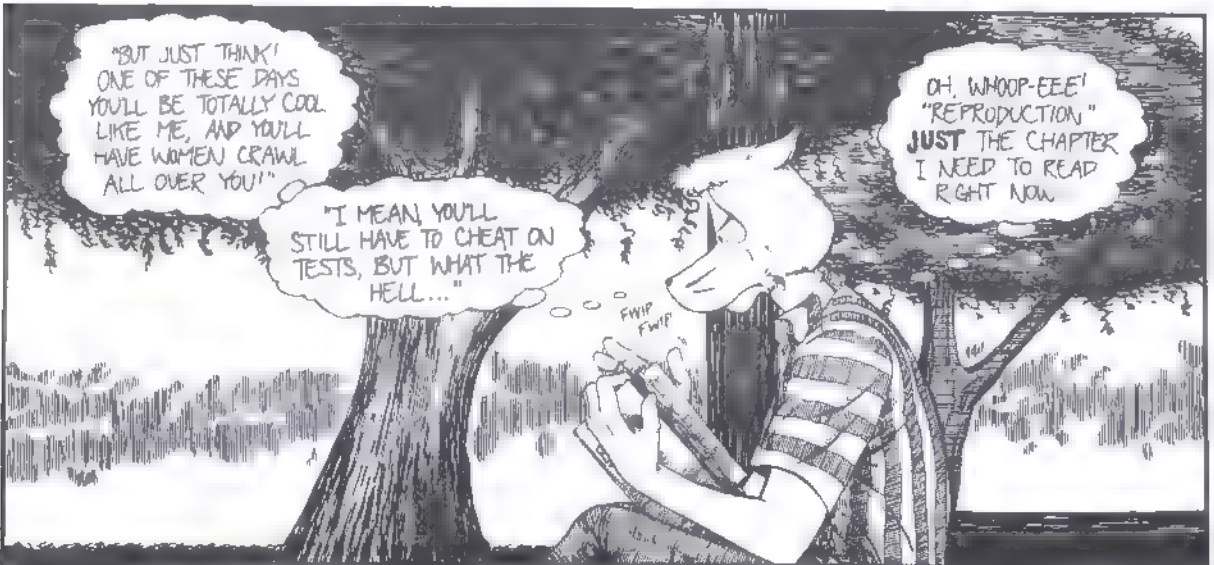




JESUS

I SWEAR  
THAT GUY

"DON'T BE SO DOWN  
ON YOURSELF, JOEY  
YOU'RE NOT A TOTAL  
DIPSHIT! YOU'RE ONLY  
A PARTIAL DIPSHIT!"



"BUT JUST THINK!  
ONE OF THESE DAYS  
YOU'LL BE TOTALLY COOL  
LIKE ME, AND YOU'LL  
HAVE WOMEN CRAWL  
ALL OVER YOU!"

"I MEAN, YOU'LL  
STILL HAVE TO CHEAT ON  
TESTS, BUT WHAT THE  
HELL..."

OH, WHOOP-EEE!  
"REPRODUCTION"  
JUST THE CHAPTER  
I NEED TO READ  
RIGHT NOW

Fwip  
Fwip

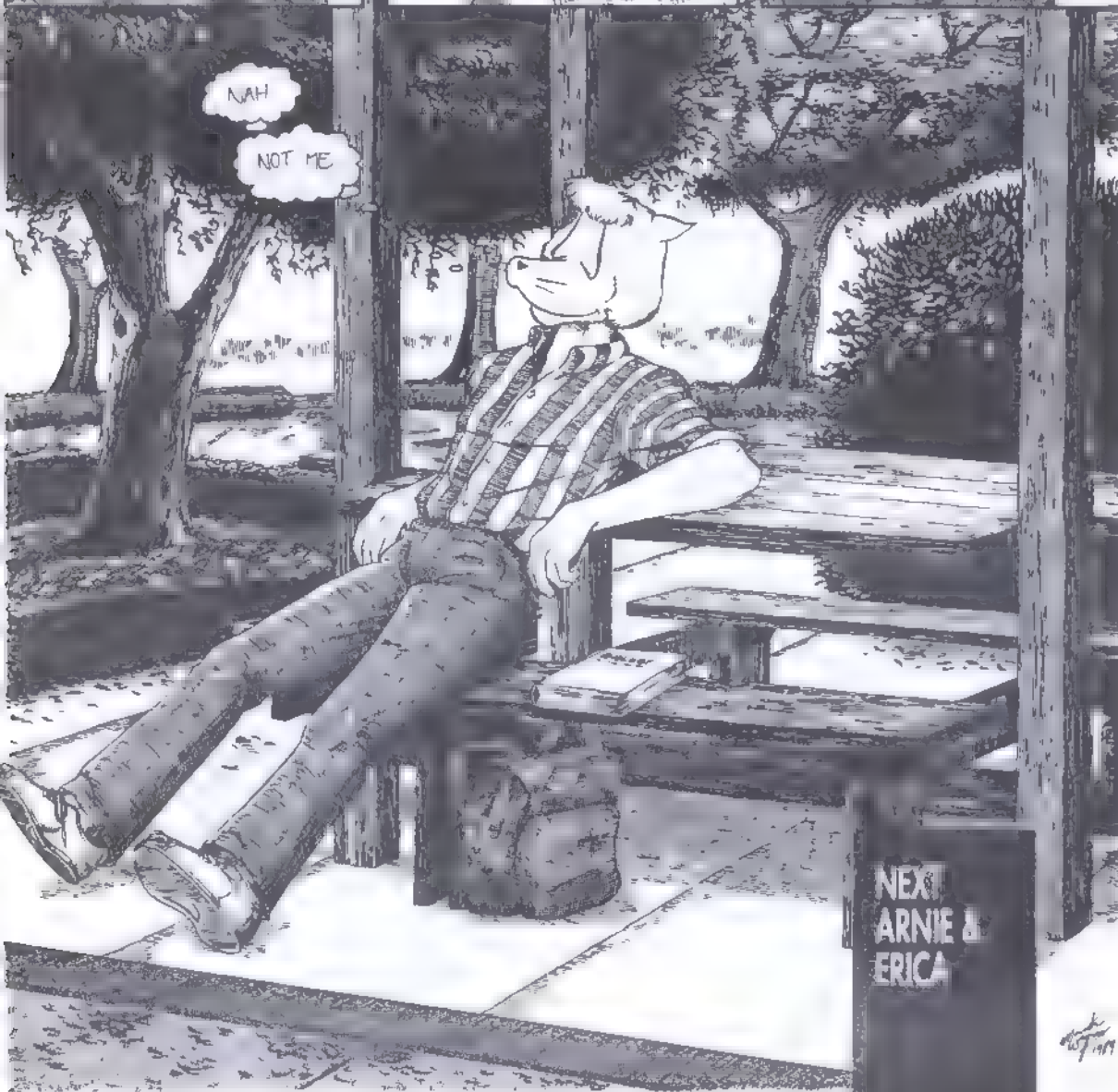
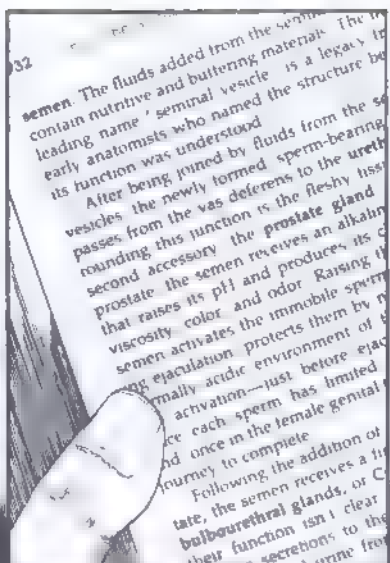


Hi

Hi







# DEAR HEPCATS

7117 WOOD HOLLOW DR , # 1728 , AUSTIN , TEXAS , 78731

"Yo! Martin!" writes our number one fan Beth Andries, who goes by the name 'Bonzail' (or, in informal moments, 'The Bonz') of Lookout Mountain Dr., Austin. "As for the quote on my letter in the Chronicle [a little newszine I produced for fans] 1) I was going to mail it with 15¢ but 2) I didn't have any stamps less than 25¢ 3) I wanted to put it in an envelope anyway as our mailman likes to read our mail—ha!" Okay. Anyway, it's a long, droll correspondence, written inside a very thoughtful Christmas card, and it completely puts the lie to the myth that "cartooners can't meet wimmen." Also, in order to answer all of her questions I've done the unusual thing of footnoting the letter so's I didn't miss anything. She continues...

No, really, I was just in a rush to write it (as my handwriting might have shown). BUT, here's my tip for you: send out the *Chronicles* as bulk mail. That way you can get them out from 9-12¢ each. No kidding! I used to run a newsletter myself<sup>1</sup> so I know it just about takes a fireplace poker to a postperson's backside for them to tell you everything about bulk mail, but it'll be worth it. I believe you'll need a circulation of about, oh, 100 or so but I'm probably wrong,<sup>2</sup> check it out dude. Well, anyway, I got a big kick out of the *Chronicle*, esp. w/quote on me (you can check with my parents on my true reaction—I started screaming in laughter when I read it and they thought I was in convulsions or somethin! It really caught me off guard!<sup>3</sup>) By the way, the only place I've seen Yo is at the Texas Union store. I'm eventually

gonna hit on somebody around me to buy it for my Xmas present so I wanna know if there's any other spots around town they can buy it.<sup>4</sup>

By the way, is there any way I can meet the great guru of *Hepcats*? I missed your Yo signing party. I'd like to be able to talk to you regularly to see how the comicstrip job is like. I had Fred (the horsie) and his entourage of pals entertain my readers in a newsletter circulation of about 40-85 and also in old pen pal letters for about a year in high school. As for now, Fred (and my Bosworth Bevo) entertain only on my notebooks and lecture notes.<sup>5</sup> So, honestly, I'm not trying to set up a date or anything (I'm in a very steady relationship<sup>6</sup>) but I'm a social kinda person<sup>7</sup>, and simply wanna meet ya' on a friendly, social basis. If you'd like, you can meet me on campus during these times...<sup>8</sup>

So, if you're at all interested look for a very bright yellow and black backpack and I'll have long, copper-blond hair and a 5'11" frame. S'alright? S'alright. So again, this is all strictly social (I keep saying that if you're at all nervous<sup>9</sup>). O bee kay bee? Let's rap on *Hepcats* and general UT jokes. Well, I hope to either meet you or keep other frequent correspondence with you as you'd be a most valuable contact for me to experience such a job as yours. Fred and I await your response, either written or a personal meeting at those places I've mentioned. Yo' pal,

BETH ANDRIES "BONZAIL"  
AUSTIN

<sup>1</sup>I've done three. The *Hepcats*

*Chronicle* was kind of an afterthought and it didn't have the circulation. If I'd thought of it back at the *Dragon's Lair* signing I'd be bulk mailing myself into a coma.

<sup>2</sup>Nope, you're about right.

<sup>3</sup>I tend to do that to women.

<sup>4</sup>Ordering info is available a couple of pages hence, for you non-Austin residents, said the crass Double Diamond Press promotions man.

<sup>5</sup>That's where I used to do all my best work.

<sup>6</sup>Me, too. Shit.

<sup>7</sup>I never would've guessed.

<sup>8</sup>In deference to Ms. Andries' privacy I've omitted the remainder of this paragraph, in which she goes on to list her entire Fall 1988 class schedule right down to room numbers and buildings, what benches and halls she sat in between classes, and where her favorite study cubby in the Undergraduate Library is. This is all, of course, strictly social.

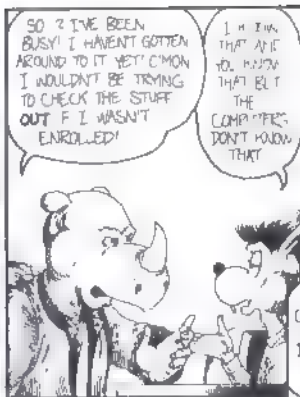
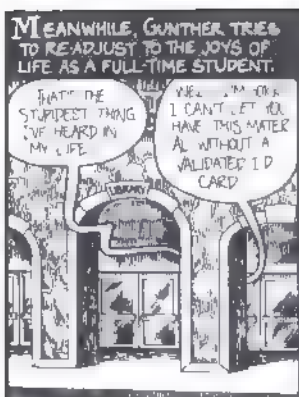
<sup>9</sup>It took two cups of coffee but I'm better now.

PS: The card was sweet. Sappy, but sweet.

Dear Sir,

Since arriving in Austin this fall, I have grown to love *Hepcats*. It is a refreshing break from the normal *Garfield* and *Peanuts* pap, in that the characters, though animals, are real people. I greatly appreciate the serial style of the strip, and one of my great joys is awakening in the morning just early enough to grab a donut and the *Texan*, and then opening the paper to the last page to see what's





Here are some selected strips from *Yo: The First Hepcats Book*.

up in **Hepcats**.

The style of the strip I find reminiscent of both *Omaha*, the *Cat Dancer* and certain Japanese *manga* titles, and yet it is not a boldfaced copy. While certain inspirations are apparent, the art is nevertheless an original. Thank you for your time, and for giving me **Hepcats**. Sincerely,

CHRIS ROBERSON  
JESTER DORMITORY, U.T.  
AUSTIN

PS: Martin, you aren't by any chance related to Matt Wagner, are you? Naahh. Didn't think so.

I never wake up early enough to get a Texan, Chris.

Here's my second letter from a cartoonist for *Ka Leo O Hawaii*, the University of Hawaii newspaper. Apparently, he's been reading my stuff for years and asked for a copy of the book. I can't remember where I put the first letter but it's on another disc somewhere on this god-damn desk, where some of your letters will likely end up, too, if you're all very nice and eat your vegetables.

....

Dear Mr. Wagner:

Thank you for taking the time to respond—I've enclosed a money order, and am looking forward to receiving my copy of your book.

I'm glad that my letter gave you a lift—I know how that feels. A week after sending off my missive to you I got a call from an editor at *Northern Light*, the University of Alaska at Anchorage student newspaper. They had, I found out, been reading my comic strip *Yossarian*, and the editor asked me for permission to reprint it in his paper. As you can imagine, I was walking on air for the rest of the day.

I'm also glad that you have big plans for **Hepcats**. It's top-quality anthropomorphic work. I hope I'll be able to see it soon alongside *Omaha* and *Usagi Yojimbo* at the local comics store (though the store, Jelly's, seems to have gone gun-shy since the Friendly Frank's case, and I don't know how much longer I'll be able to find *Omaha*).

If you have a minute to jot off a note when you mail the book, could you give me a little information on how you went about getting *Yo* into print? Some friends have been encouraging me to do the same for

*Yossarian*.

Give my best to Van Garrett, Tom King, Robert Rodriguez and the rest—I'm a fan of their strips as well. The Texan has the most consistently interesting comics page of any college paper I've seen. Awaiting your reply.

DAVID STROUP  
KAILUA, HAWAII

"From Hawaii to Alaska, *Yossarian* is truly a multicospherical comic strip"—Martin Wagner. Put that on the back of your book, David. By the way, what's *Northern Light* paying you?

And you know, if I ran a store with a name like Jelly's, I'd be gun-shy for a lot of reasons.

Martin,

I read *Yo: The First Hepcats Book* over the weekend, and I really enjoyed it. I think it's one of the funniest comic strip collections I've ever read, and I think **Hepcats** could easily compete with most syndicated comic strips.

All of your characters are unique and interesting. I like them all, but Arnie is my favorite, because



I can identify with him in some ways. My favorite panel in the whole book was the last panel in chapter 2.

The continuity is the best part of the book. The story lines were so well structured that it was like reading a graphic novel and not a collection of comic strips. (It must be difficult to write a comic strip with strong continuity that is consistently funny, but you have accomplished it.)

Anxiously awaiting the second **Hepcats** book,

SHANE BOYLE  
HOUSTON

PS: I am going to be reviewing **Yo** for the second issue of *Elsewhere*. I will send you a copy of this issue when it comes out, and (if possible) I will also send you a copy of the review before it is printed.

Dear Martin,

Lately I've been keeping up with your comic strip **Hepcats** in *The Daily Texan* and I must say I've enjoyed it very much. In the past few weeks you've mentioned **Hepcats** books and comics. Are there any compilations of your work? If so,

could you please send me some information on them? My comic strip, *Gladstone*, runs occasionally in the [Georgia State University] *Signal's* Tuesday Magazine; however, we are a weekly publication and our in-house comics aren't as popular as other universities'. In fact, most students pick up the *Signal*, read the week's release of

*Bloom County*, then toss the paper into the gutter.

Anyway, I'd like to see more of your work and I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely,

EDDIE PITTMAN  
ATLANTA

*That Berke'll fuck your ego up, won't he?*

## Yo Cats!

We only have a few hundred copies of the first edition of **YO** left, kids, so I thought I'd make them available to you new readers through mail order (see inside back cover). But since there are so few left, those of you who are interested in seeing the early **Hepcats**, and its development from a Trudeau-Influenced gag strip to the story strip that led to the comic book series today—well, you might want to get those orders off, as they will be treated on a first-come first-serve basis. Thanks in advance to those of you who do.

This book covers the first 14 months of the strip's run. I'll let you know soon when the second collection is planned.



# THE GREAT HEPCATS

## LANSING, ILLINOIS FAN SEARCH

All the comparisons *Hepcats* has gotten to *Omaha* have been nice, to be sure—*Omaha* is a noteworthy book with a substantial following, but we are only too well aware that these comparisons might **scare off some dealers** who prohibit adult and underground comics in their stores. We were most nervous about response to the book in the Midwest, particularly Lansing, Illinois, home of the notorious Friendly Frank's obscenity trial. Imagine, then, our **genuine surprise** when the largest segment of Capital City's order was directed to—you guessed it—their Illinois warehouse in Sparta. Wow.

Now, as I'm sure you might know by now (if you've read this issue), there are only superficial similarities between *Hepcats* and *Omaha*, but preconceptions will abound, no matter

how many times I assure people I'm not going to put **graphic copulation** in this series (discreet copulation, maybe, but hey).

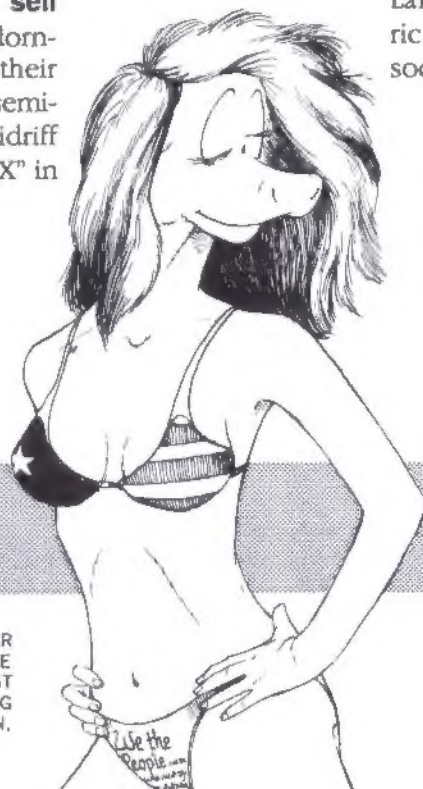
Still, the high Illinois orders were an indication that maybe you Illinis **weren't such bluenoses** after all. In fact, the efforts of the PMRC and the funda(non)mentalists aside, nationwide attitudes toward sexuality seem as open as ever. Even the trendy *Esquire* magazine, proving once again they know how to **sell magazines** by adorning the cover of their May issue with a seminude female midriff and the word "SEX" in

what looks like 320-point type, offered this sound advice on that same cover: "Use It or Lose It: Just thinking about sex builds disease-fighting neuropeptides." Well, hot damn! **Take that, Judge Foxgrover!**

Therefore, we at *Hepcats* want to know—IS ANYONE READING THIS IN LANSING? Or is Lansing **controlled** by the Dutch Reform Church, as the indignant freelancers' hatchet rag *WAP!* claims? If

you Lansingites are out there, then **write us!** And in *Hepcats* #3, responses willing, 'Dear Hepcats' will be a Lansing, Illinois Theme Page, with nothing but letters from you brave people in Lansing (with other Illinois-based letters receiving second priority), exercising your First Amendment freedoms to read any comic you like, no matter **who's fucking whom in it!**

We look forward to hearing from you, Lansing. The very fabric of our free-market society rests upon it.



HOT HOT HOT! **ERICA** MODELS THE LATEST IN SUMMER SWIMWEAR FROM DOUBLE DIAMOND FASHIONS! TAKE FREEDOM OF SPEECH TO THE BEACH WITH FIRST AMENDMENT FUNWEAR! IF ONLY THE FOUNDING MOTHERS HAD BEEN WEARING THESE...(100% RAYON, 2-PIECE, \$50.00)

# Yo

**Martin Wagner**

The first *Hepcats* book

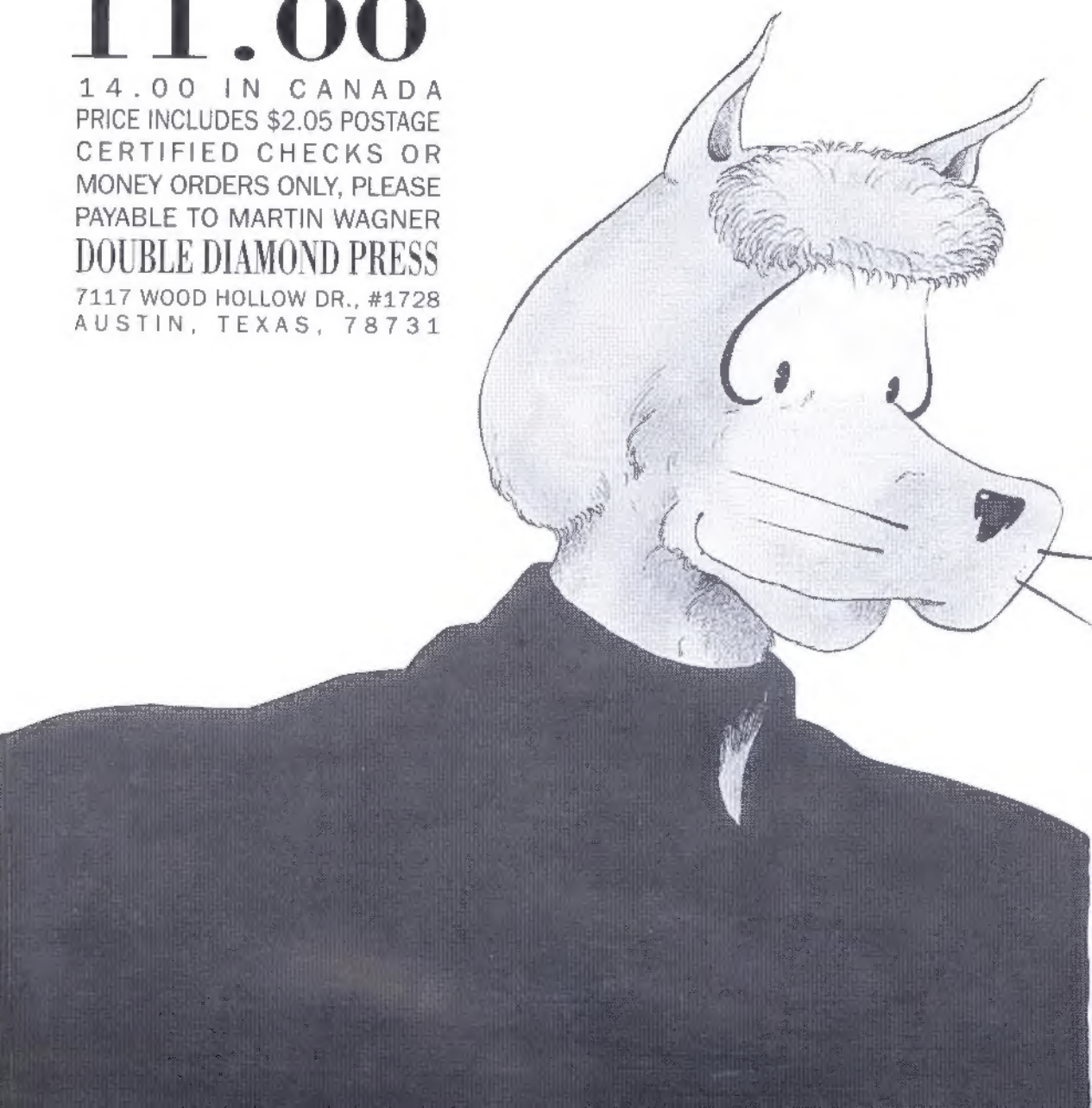
FIRST EDITION

# 11.00

14.00 IN CANADA  
PRICE INCLUDES \$2.05 POSTAGE  
CERTIFIED CHECKS OR  
MONEY ORDERS ONLY, PLEASE  
PAYABLE TO MARTIN WAGNER  
**DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS**

7117 WOOD HOLLOW DR., #1728  
AUSTIN, TEXAS, 78731

ONLY A FEW HUNDRED LEFT!







MW PHOTO BY JOHN F. MOORE HALLOWEEN 1986